University of Alberta

The Visual Image of a Person: the Essentialist and Comparative Approaches

by Lilia Verchinina ©

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Abstract

Do Byzantine iconoclasts and modern artists have anything in common? Looking back at the Byzantine iconoclastic debates of the eighth and ninth century, I define iconoclasm not as a negative reaction to the visual image in general, but as a rejection of pictorial human representations based on the belief that appearance cannot adequately express the complex essence of the human being. The Byzantine iconoclasts believed that icons—portraits of God, the Virgin Mary, and the saints—portrayed only what was seen, and failed to depict the hidden inexpressible component of a person. They instead suggested images of people which would represent each person in his or her entirety, not only the person's futile appearance. These kind of images included virtues, deeds and verbal descriptions. The Byzantine iconoclastic debates highlighted the intimate link between portraits and the problems of personhood, raising the key question: What, exactly, is a person? The same issues were raised once again in the artistic disputes surrounding the invention of photography. On a more fundamental level, this conflict, however, was not one about art and photography, but about the most effective means of grasping the essence of things. The belief in the hidden essence of a person (or a thing) actually unites artists with photographers regardless of their modes of expression. Furthermore, that belief binds artists and photographers with the Byzantine iconoclasts under the same essentialist approach. In this dissertation, I argue that the essentialist attitude towards person is based on the Platonic opposition of the external versus the internal. That

opposition may be also observed in modern concepts of identity and subjectivity, which too are traditionally essentialist.

The aim of my research was to put forward an alternative, comparative, approach to person. This alternative, admittedly, has already been proposed by the Byzantine defenders of icons, who explained that icons do not even attempt to unveil any sort of hidden essence. Instead, they identify people, distinguishing each of them from all others. The visual plays the key role here—it may not reveal anything hidden, but it does not conceal anything either. Based on the difference, but not the essence, the visual simply distinguishes one person from another.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

My research was provoked in part by the argument of many remarkable contemporary thinkers that images are replacing the real word.[1] In the modern world, visual images have become reality and reality has become merely visual images: our world has been inundated with images. Are these considerations, though, an entirely new phenomenon? Or are old fears resurfacing? Twelve centuries ago the Byzantine iconoclastic movement voiced similar concerns. Icons, they argued, portraits of God, the Virgin Mary and the saints, replace those they depict. Iconoclastic worries, including the fear of images and idols, have returned. Intellectual historian Martin Jay and specialist on visual culture Thomas Mitchell both observe that the history of visual images is about the fear of images: "One need only invoke the names of Baudrillard and Debord to remind ourselves that the image as a pseudoagency, a power in its own right, is alive and well."[2] Susan Sontag devoted two books, *On Photography* and *Regarding the Pain of Others*, to this theme, namely the fear that a representation may replace the represented: "The argument is in fact a defense of reality and the imperiled standards for responding to it."[3] The fear of replacement is a kind of *imagophobia*. Images, which should follow, reflect, and reveal reality, in fact, replace reality—somewhat of a reversal of the perspective of the contemporary world. Jorge Luis Borges expresses the contemporary anxiety over the usurpation of reality in his short story "The Circular Ruins": "With relief, with humiliation, with terror, he realized that he, too, was but appearance, that another man was dreaming him."[4]

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[1] Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. Sheila Faria Glasser (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1995); Jean Baudrillard, "Object," in *Art and Artefact*, ed. Nicholas Zurbrugg (Sage Publications: London, 1997).

[2] W.J. Thomas Mitchell, *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 96; Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: the Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994).

[3] Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2004), 109.

This concern, however, is not only the domain of the postmodern thinkers like Baudrillard. Feuerbach was also disturbed by the reversed perspective of the modern world:

> In reality, where everything passes on naturally, the copy follows the original, the image the thing it represents, the thought its object—but on the supernatural, miraculous ground of theology, the original follows the copy, the thing its own likeness.[5]

Marx shared this concern, and the notion of replacement is at home in his analysis of commodities and surplus value. Images assume a status, which they do not inherently possess. Similarly, commodities, according to Marx, assume the status of real things even though they are merely "phantoms."[6] Estranged from their creators, commodities start living their own lives—they assume a surrogate form of real life. Sontag continues in this vein in her *On Photography*, commenting on the invention of photography. Photography made it possible to possess a person or a thing in the surrogate form of its photographic image.[7] Armed with a camera, anyone can convert any experience, person or thing into an image for personal possession. Sontag even calls photography "acquisition."[8] Photographs of cherished loved ones, for example, create the illusion of their presence—they are then preserved in photo-albums.[9] People possess, manipulate, and overpower things using photographic images.[10] Like Feuerbach, Sontag describes the reversed perspective of the contemporary world, and like Baudrillard she argues that the notion of reality has changed: "reality has come to seem more and more what we are shown by cameras."[11] Unlike Feuerbach though, Sontag goes beyond simply the contrast dividing image from reality. That contrast implies a radical separation between a copy and its original, which may have been the case for modern secularized painting, but not photography. A painting only refers to the original, while a photograph is "a part of, an extension of that subject."[12] Sontag colorfully describes the peculiarity of the photographic process:

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[4] Jorge Luis Borges and Andrew Hurley, *Borges: Collected Fictions* (New York: Penguin Books Ltd., 1999), 100.
[5] Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Religion* (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 1989), 24.
[6] Karl Marx, *Capital. Vol. 1: A Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Ben Fowkes (London, New York: Penguin Books Ltd., 1990)
[7] Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Picador, 1973), 155.

> Our irrepressible feeling that the photographic process is something magical has a genuine basis. No one takes an easel paining to be in any sense co-substantial with its subject; it only represents or refers. But a photograph is not only like its subject, a homage to the subject.[13]

In the eighth century the Byzantine iconoclasts attacked icons on exactly these grounds. They believed that icon-worshipers considered their icons of Christ as "co-substantial" with their original. Paradoxically, though, the iconoclastic emperor himself required a co-substantiality of the true image: the image should not be like an original, but should be *essentially* the same—without an artificial copy as a mere projection of reality, there could be no fear of replacement. However, it was rather senseless to require co-substantiality of visual images. The essence of icons is naturally different from their referents, so instead a ban was leveled on the paintings outright. The fear of images was not overcome.

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[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid., 16.
[10] Susan Sontag, *Conversation with Susan Sontag (Literary Conversations Series)*, ed. Leland Poague (Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 1995), 91.
[11] Sontag, *On Photography*, p.161.
[12] Ibid., 155.
[13] Ibid.

Let us return now, though, to contemporary concerns: "One need only invoke the names of Baudrillard and Debord to remind ourselves that the image as a pseudoagency, a power in its own right, is alive and well."[14] Indeed, Baudrillard describes the dark picture of a hyper-real world, where the image is nothing but a pure simulacrum with no relation to reality. Baudrillard's description of the successive phases in the development of the image seems convincing:

> …it is the reflection of a profound reality;
> it masks and denatures a profound reality;
> it masks the *absence* of a profound reality;
> it has no relation to any reality whatsoever: it is its own pure simulacrum.[15]

Baudrillard's theory of the image confirms the argument that most of the powerful theoreticians of the visual image have been iconoclastic. Baudrillard seems to believe that the image is a "good appearance" in its first stage, but becomes evil in the second.[16] However, his iconoclastic attitude is even visible in that first benign step of development, where the image reflects "a profound reality." I agree with Jay that Western theories of image have typically been iconoclastic. These theories assign the image the function of reflection or the revelation of a profound reality. The history of secularized painting, for instance, shows that the role of the image was seen as the reflection or interpretation of nature. Art existed in agreement with Kant's philosophy, according to which one can never directly know the *noumena*—a visual image may strive to reach its original but it never does. In other words, this type of attitude was based on the belief that there is no straightforward path to hidden reality. What follows from this theory is a gap between the image and the original. This gap then exacerbates the danger of replacement. The threat of idolatry is a persistent theme: the image which only appears to be a real thing, not even participating in the reality of the referent, ultimately replaces its referent. Sontag argues, however, that modern theories of image, drawing a sharp distinction between the original and copy, do not properly take into account photography and the images it produces.[17] Here, she explains, there is a link between the image and its original even on the chemical level of the photographic process.

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[14] Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want*, 96.
[15] Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, 6.
[16] Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, 6.

Theoreticians of the visual image often counterpoise the origins of image-making to the modern attitude of image.[18] In ancient times, they explain, an image was not seen as radically separate from its original; it served as a means to gain control over real things. This attitude is consistent with Sontag's explanation of photography as a means of possessing things in a duplicate form. However, "magical primitivism," as the theoreticians call this notion, as well as the "co-substantiality of image and reality" are merely figures of speech, not an adequate framework for explaining images. Is there an alternative theory of image which puts aside both the modern explanation, with its sharp distinction between image and proto-image, and this so-called magical primitivism, with its co-substantiality of image and original? Logically speaking, this third way should be dialectical: the image is identical to its original and different at the same time. This dialectical approach was elaborated by the prominent defenders of icons during the period of Byzantine Iconoclasm of the eighth century. This theory ruled out the iconoclastic accusations of idolatry which argued that the image is not one with its original and therefore risks replacing it. They argued that the icon and its subject were both simultaneously the same and different, ruling out the possibility of replacement. Their dialectical theory has provided me with the background to revise the very concept of the visual.

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[17] Sontag, *On Photography*, 155.
[18] Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want*, 127; Sontag, *On Photography*, 155; Hans Belting and Edmund Jephcott, *Likeness and Presence: a History of the Image before the Era of Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), chap. 13 and 14; E. H. Gombrich, *The Uses of Images* (London: Phaidon Press, 2000).

The iconoclasts argued against not just any image, but specifically the visual representation of human beings. In this respect, the Byzantine iconoclastic debates reveal the link between the problems of the visual and the question of personhood. In other words, the dialectical theory of the visual image opens a new perspective on person and ultimately questions the universality of such concepts as identity and subjectivity. Referring to the Byzantine iconoclastic debates, I have defined the visual attitude not as an appreciation of art, but as the idea of a person's visual component as self-sufficient. I have also revised another concept, "iconoclasm." It should not, in my opinion, be seen as a negative reaction to art, but as a rejection of pictorial human representation based on the belief that appearances cannot adequately represent human nature. I call the iconoclastic approach essentialist—a search for a person's inexpressible human essence hidden under the veil of appearance.

Theoretical orientation

Scientific skepticism, the methodological principle of Modernity, has not favored the visual image as a focus of research. Researchers, particularly sociologists, typically seek to look behind the façade: "This unmasking imperative is one of the characteristics of sociology particularly at home in the temper of the modern era."[19] Durkheim explained the basis of the sociological method:

> Thus if we wish to understand the real way in which facts are linked together, we must give up this ideological method. We must strip away that surface of ideas in order to penetrate to the deep things that they express more or less unreliably, the underlying forces from which they derive.[20]

According to this perspective the visual is a façade; the image is an inessential thing which often conceals but sometimes expresses the essential. In Baudrillard's extreme vision, behind each image is simply the absence of anything at all. This perception of absence has led to concerns about the deluge of visual images in the contemporary world—the non-essential replacing something essential—and the idea of image as an object of study has been downgraded. In its attitude towards images, the social theory of Modernity is not simply a discipline with competitive approaches and methods, but a specific cultural system which, despite its indisputable potential, has been burdened by the limits of its time. The essentialist attitude toward image and person has dominated modern social theory. In my research, I try to address the problem of image and person from the non-modern perspective established by the Byzantine apologists of icons.

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[19] Peter L. Berger, *Invitation to Sociology: a Humanistic Perspective* (New York: An Anchor Book, 1963), 38.
[20] Emile Durkheim, *Rules of Sociological Method* (New York: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1982), 168.

My research is based on the works of those who participated in the Byzantine iconoclastic unrest. I mentioned that modern research has primarily tried to look behind the so-called "façade," but what does one find behind that façade?—power and control.[21] Thus the texts of the Byzantine iconoclastic debates were previously taken as a façade hiding the debate's driving motives. By the beginning of the twentieth century it was common to study Byzantine Iconoclasm primarily as a political event, ignoring iconophile texts, failing to see that conflict was basically one between two incompatible views of image and person.[22] Only in the early fifties was the concept of image finally seen as a point of interest by scholars in Byzantine iconoclasm. Florovsky, for instance, pioneered a fresh view, raising questions about the actual doctrine of the iconoclasts.[23] Later, the iconoclastic concept of image itself was brought into the discussion.

Florovsky, however, did not intend to introduce a new and exhaustive explanation of Byzantine Iconoclasm. Instead, he understood the significance of previously underestimated factors. He noted that the iconoclastic theological debates were not simply ritualistic. Unlike his predecessors, Florovsky did not believe in and did not look for the "real" concealed cause of Byzantine Iconoclasm, supposedly lying just behind that doctrine. Later researchers too began to look at the debates themselves more closely, paying a particular attention to the texts of the iconoclastic era.

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[21] Berger, *Invitation to Sociology*, 68.

[22] See, for example: Konstantin Nikolaevich Uspenskii, *Ocherki po istorii Vizantii* [Essays on Byzantine history] (M.: Izd-vo Obschestva pri Istoriko-Filosofskom Fakul'tete, 1917); Karl Schwartzlose, *Der Bilderstreit* [The Image Controversy] (Gotha, 1890).

[23] Florovsky, "Origen, Eusebius and the Iconoclastic Controversy," 1.

As I have said, my approach is based on the non-modern theory formulated by the defenders of Byzantine iconography, including: the works of John of Damascus, Theodore the Studite, and Patriarch Nikephoros; the vitae of the saints; and the texts of the Seventh Ecumenical Council. I have used sources translated into English[24] and Russian.[25] My approach to the visual representation of a person was also based on iconographic pattern books: guides written for iconographers, outlining approved depictions of the saints with sketches and short written descriptions. What distinguishes my work from other works on iconoclasm is my argument that *the problem of icons and the problem of person are intimately connected through the*

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[24] John of Damascus, Saint, *Three Treatise on the Divine Images*, trans. Andrew Louth (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminar Press, 2003); Daniel J. Sahas, *Icon and Logos: Sources in Eight-Century Iconoclasm* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986); Cyril Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire: 312—1453*(Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1972); Schaff, Philip and Henry Wace, eds., *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: The Seven Eccumenical Councils*, Vol. 14 (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995).

[25] Ioann Damaskin, *Tvorenija prepodobnogo Ioanna Damaskina: istochnik znanij* [The works of Saint John of Damascus: Fountain of knowledge] (M.: Indrik, 2002); Feodor Studit, "Pervoe oproverzhenie ikonobortsev" [The first refutation of iconoclasts], *Simvol* 18 (1987):253-268; Feodor Studit, "Vtoroe oproverzhenie ikonobortsev" [The second refutation of iconoclasts], *Simvol* 18 (1987) 18:269—294; Feodor Studit, "Tret'e oproverzhenie ikonobortsev" [The third refutation of iconoclasts], Simvol 18 (1987): 295—331; Feodor Studit, Saint, *Poslaniya: kniga 1*[Epistles: Book 1] (M., 2003); Feodor Studit, *Poslaniya: kniga 2* [Epistles: Book 2] (M., 2003); Nikifor Arkhiepiskop Konstantinopol'skij, *Tvorenija svjatogo ottsa nashego Nikifora, arkhiepiskopa konstantinopol'skogo* [The works of our Father Nicephoros, archbishop of Constantinople] (Minks: Kharvest, 2001); Feodor Raifskij, "Predugotovlenie" [Apointment], in *Prepodobnyj Anastasij Sinait: Izbrannye proizvedenija* [Saint Anastasias of Sinai: Selected works] (M., 2003).

problem "what can be the truest image of a person?" Through this work, analysis of the iconoclastic debates can contribute to the social theory of identity.

I should first, though, mention several contemporary scholars whose works have helped me to reach the conclusion that icons put forward an alternative approach towards not only image, but also person. The works of Charles Barber, for example, describe the Byzantine iconoclastic controversy as a conflict between two concepts of image: the material, represented by iconophiles; and immaterial, represented by iconoclasts.[26] Based on this observation, I have noted the parallels between the immaterial concept of image and the modern concept of identity, which, I believe, are characteristic of the same *essentialist approach*. My concept of essentialism is influenced by Jacques Derrida's reading of Plato.[27] Specifically, I have used Derrida's analysis of the system of oppositions in metaphysics, his principal opposition *the external versus the internal*. I conclude that this same opposition is also characteristic of Byzantine iconoclastic arguments. The works of other scholars have also been crucial to my study. Gilbert Dagron[28] and Henry Maguire,[29] for instance, point out the distinct function of icons—to identify a saint by distinguishing him or her from all others. Their works encouraged me to question the essentialist attitude toward the person which relies on notions of subjectivity and identity. Dagron's essay led me to consider the parallels between icons and modern photo-identification. Reading Poe's[30] and Benjamin's[31] comments on the function of early photography (to establish a strong identity of a person with his photographic portrait), I questioned the idea that the visual approach was buried by Modernity. Instead, I have concluded that it survived in early daguerreotype portraits and the facial composites used in contemporary criminology.

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[26] Charles Barber, "Icon and Portrait in the Trial of Symeon the New Theologian," in *Icon and Word: the Power of Images in Byzantium*, eds. Antony Eastmond and Liz James (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003); Charles Barber, "Writing on the Body: Memory, Desire, and the Holy in Iconoclasm," in *Desire and Denial in Byzantium*, ed. Liz James (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999); Charles Barber, *Figure and Likeness: On the Limits of Representation in Byzantine Iconoclasm* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002); Charles Barber, "A Sufficient Knowledge: Icon and Body in Ninth-Century Byzantium," in *Interpreting Christian Art*, eds. Heidi J.Hornic and Mickeal C. Parsons (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2003).

[27] Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1974); Jacques Derrida, "Plato's Pharmacy" in Jacues Derrida, in *Dissemination* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981).

[28] Gilbert Dagron, "Holy Images and Likeness," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 45 (1991): 23—33.

[29] Henry Maguire, *Rhetoric, Nature and Magic in Byzantine Art* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998); Henry Maguire, "Truth and Convention," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 28 (1974): 111—140, 113; Henry Maguire, "Originality in Byzantine Art" in *Originality in Byzantine Literature, Art and Music*, ed. A.

In general, my research focuses on two incompatible attitudes toward the visual image and a person: the essentialist (or iconoclastic) and the comparative (visual). I address the iconoclastic approach in the second chapter of my dissertation, where I argue that the Byzantine unrests of the eighth and ninth centuries were an advance of the essentialist attitude. I also turn to the earlier and later essentialist theories of image proposed by historically significant thinkers, including Plato and Marx. Those two names are linked by a shared aversion to exteriorization. Plato held an antipathy to everything external including writing and painting. Marx opposed the exteriorization of human essence. My third chapter addresses the comparative approach specifically, drawing on the iconophile understanding of image. The political considerations of the comparative attitude toward the visual image and person were not the focus of my research. My fourth chapter builds on the grounds

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R Littlewood (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 1995); Henry Maguire, *The Icons of their Bodies* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996.

[30] Allan Poe, "The Daguerreotype," *Alexander's Weekly Messanger* 15 (1840) (January 15): 2.

[31] Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism,* trans. Harry Zohn (London: NLB, 1973); Walter Benjamin, "A Short History of Photography," in *Classical Essays on Photography*, ed. Alan Trachtenberg (New Haven: Leete's Island Books, 1980).

provided by this historical material. In it, I perform a critical analysis of the essentialist approach still being promoted by contemporary thinkers expressed in the modern concepts of subjectivity and identity, and materialized in modern art and culture.

Chapter 2. Essentialist approach: the iconoclastic challenge

The Icon of Christ

What does a person's likeness represent? Were it simply a body, one would call it a corpse. The image of a person represents something alive, meeting more than its outer shell. One's likeness is not simply one's appearance of a person—it is seen as the person him- or herself. The image of a person, for example, is usually addressed by the name of that person. Does, then, the image of a person represent something inexpressible? To express the inexpressible is an oxymoron, but still these considerations perturbed the Byzantine society for over a hundred years (730—842).

Figure 2.1: *Savior Acheiropoietos (Mandylion)*, XV century.
Courtesy of the Andrei Rublev Museum. Photograph by the author.

In 726 the Byzantine Emperor Leo III, Isaurian, ordered the removal of the ancient portrait of Christ that had been prominently placed on the Chalce Gate of the

Imperial Palace. This event marked the outbreak of what is known as Byzantine Iconoclasm. The removal of the image was followed by a prohibition against placing icons in public places and, moreover, even the possession of icons were prohibited. What was it about iconography that agitated the Byzantine iconoclasts? This question prompted my research.

Figure 2.2: *The Virgin Hodegetria*, XVI century. Courtesy of the Andrei Rublev Museum of Early Russian Art. Photograph by the author.

Figure 2.3: *The Apostle Paul*. Courtesy of the Andrei Rublev Museum of Early Russian Art. Photograph by the author.

Eastern Christian icons usually depict the Savior, Theotocos or the saints with the focal point lying on face.[32] In fact, the Russian word for icon is "lik," meaning face, and even the proportions of the body are generally expressed in "face-lengths" (the length of the body is measured as nine of these face-lengths).[33] A figure's visage then dominates the icon's composition. The oldest iconographic types are The Savior Acheiropoietos (the Savior not-made-by-hands) and the Pantocrator (the Ruler of all). Of course, representations of the Savior do vary even within these two classifications, but still these two iconographic types are easily recognizable and distinguishable, and can be seen in any Orthodox cathedral.

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[32] In the Eastern tradition Christ is often called "The Savior," while the Virgin Mary is "Theotocos."

As an introduction to the Eastern Christian visual tradition it may help if we look at an example Savior Acheiropoietos iconographic style (Figure 2.1). As we can see, almost the entire composition is filled by the face: the image lacks a neck and shoulders; and the icon's focal point is clearly the eyes. They look directly at the person standing in front of the icon. The large dark circles that surround the eyes emphasize this focus. The nose is a straight light line. The lips are thin and small. There is nothing sensual or emotional in the expression of the face. The locks of hair and the forked beard frame the picture, while the nimbus is divided by the cross. Linen falls down in rhythmic pleats below the face of the Savior, indicating that the icon was probably intended for the altar's screen. The altar screen and the linen stand for the veil in the Old Testament temple. This composition shows that the icon is an inseparable part of the church interior and the Eastern Christian liturgy.

The history of this particular iconographic tradition, the Savior "not-made-by-hands," is ancient. A defender of the icons during the Byzantine Iconoclasm, John of Damascus, tells the story of this iconographic type in his glossary on the Orthodox faith:

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[33] Erwin Panofsky, *Meaning in the Visual Art* (Garden City: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1955), 74; Paul Hetherington , ed. *The Painter's Manual of Dyonisius of Fourna* (London: the Sagittarius Press, 1981), 12.

> A story is told that Abgar, the King of Edessa, sent a painter to make the likeness of the Lord and this painter was unable to do so because of the splendor that shown from His face, whereupon the Lord placed a cloth upon His divine and life-giving countenance and impressed upon it His image which he sent to Abgar [to satisfy the latter's] desire.[34]

This story indicates that the Savior Acheiropoietos, also known as Mandylion, was the first icon of Christ. It was the representation of the Savior's face impressed upon a piece of linen. The story of the icon "not-made-by-hand" is also preserved in liturgical texts and traditions. In the liturgical year's cycle of meaningful Orthodox Feasts, for instance, there are two Feasts that are specifically devoted to the image of the Savior: the Feast which commemorates the transference of the image "not-made-by-hands" from Edessa to Constantinople; and Feast of the Orthodox Faith, which celebrates the defeat of the Byzantine iconoclasts and the triumph of iconography. The texts for both these services honor the visual representations of Christ. It is worth noting here, though, that these Feasts also celebrate the Incarnation of the Savior, the specific fact that the Savior was seen by people. In this respect, the texts reveal the link between the visual phenomena (the person was seen) and the person's historicity (therefore the person did exist). Perhaps an analogy to contemporary photo-identification will clarify this link. Modern-day photo IDs, to some extent, serve the same purpose as icons (the portraits of the Savior, Theotocos, and the saints) to icon-worshippers; that is to say the identifying portraits assure one that these people really do exist. The iconographic portrait, therefore, serves a function beyond just that of, say, illustration or decoration. The relationships between the visual representation of a person and the actual person can be described as a movement back and forth between the portrait and the portrayed. The fact that a person is seen legitimizes his or her visual representations—he or she can be portrayed—then the portrait itself in its turn, assures the viewer of the represented person's existence.

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[34] St. John Damascene, Saint, "De Fide Orthodoxa IV, 16," in Cyril Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), 171.

Eastern Christian icons advocate a comparative (or visual) attitude toward a person. More specifically, the icon identifies the person and the visual serves an important function in this recognition: icons distinguish one person from another. If one asked an icon-worshipper, what he or she sees looking at the depiction of Christ, one might be surprised by the simplicity of the response: "I see the Savior." Some explanation here is needed. The icon-worshipper does not see Christ's appearance—"this is the Savior in the icon, and He is not the appearance." Nor does the icon-worshipper see the body of Christ—one rarely finds Eastern Christian icons of the dead Christ or dead saints. And the icon-worshipper does not see the soul or the divinity of Christ either—these things cannot be seen. However, the icon-worshipper clearly sees something, replying simply, maybe even frustratingly: "I see the Savior in the icon." Even if not familiar with the old justifications of icons, formulated in the Byzantine debates, this worshipper gets straight to the point of those older arguments. The Byzantine apologists of icons would perhaps clarify: the icon depicts

Christ's hypostasis. But here too, there is a dilemma; if one were to ask the apologist what exactly this hypostasis expresses, one would probably be equally surprised to learn that this "hypostasis" expresses nothing. Hypostasis is not an essentialist term and it does not, therefore, reveal any hidden essence. Hypostasis simply distinguishes one person from another, and the visual element plays an important role in this differentiation. Again, there is a potential parallel with contemporary photo identification. Both hypostasis and the photo ID assures others of a person's existence, while at the same time distinguishing that person from others.

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Eastern Christian icons reveal a distinctive approach to the visual and a person. Specifically, these icons reveal the comparative attitude towards the person. Many interpretations of Byzantine icons familiar to me miss the link between the visual and the problems of personhood. For example, the Platonic explanation of so-called "abstract" Byzantine icons avoids the concrete problems of personhood, which were raised by the Byzantine defenders of the icons themselves, to concentrate on *eidos*. I will start this chapter with a review of the Platonic role in the Byzantine iconoclastic debates and move on to the Platonic attitude toward the visual in general. I will thus show that the iconophiles' theory of person is in conflict with the Platonic attitude toward that visual aspect. For that purpose, I will analyze Plato's dialogues. I will use Derrida's method—the analysis of Plato's oppositions—in my reading of Plato's dialogues. Those oppositions—the external versus the internal—show that Plato discriminates between two types of images: the spurious images (simulacra) and the true images. Then I will bring forward the iconoclastic concept of image and will clarify that, like Plato, the iconoclasts did not oppose just any visual image but the visual image of a person that falsifies the person's complex nature through the exteriorization of his or her visual part. Plato's type of discrimination between two types of images also runs throughout the texts of the iconoclastic arguments—the external visual images such as icons versus the internal images such as virtues. This way, the analysis of Plato's principle opposition—the external versus the internal—confirms my hypothesis that Plato should be associated with the iconoclasts rather than the iconophiles. Neither Plato nor the Byzantine iconoclasts disapproved of the visual aspect as such, they were rather wary of the exteriorization of the internal in a thing. I will argue that this is an essentialist approach. I will further discuss in this chapter the modern example of the iconoclastic or essentialist attitude—Marx's theory of alienation. From that concept of the image, which was elaborated by the Byzantine iconoclasts, I will give a definition of iconoclasm. I will then explain why I have chosen Byzantine Iconoclasm as a historical case for understanding the iconoclastic phenomenon.

I will conclude this chapter with a review of the alternative ways of looking at the Byzantine Iconoclasm of the eighth century: Byzantine Iconoclasm as a political event; Byzantine Iconoclasm as a personal emperor's heresy; and Byzantine Iconoclasm as a function of internal church controversies. In this vein, I will consider the Islamic explanation—the debates considering the influence of Islamic iconoclasm on Byzantine Iconoclasm—in more detail. I should explain, however, that the focus of my research is not particularly the question of influence, but the nature of the iconoclastic phenomenon. I address this last issue mostly because those scholars, who explore the relationships between Islamic and Byzantine Iconoclasm, often deal, in the course of their explorations, with the general nature of this iconoclastic phenomenon as well.

Debates on Plato's influence

Specialists on Byzantine aesthetics used to approach Eastern Christian icons through the Platonic tradition.[35] Icons, they state, represent a transcendental world, a heavenly reality. This predestination of the icon excluded the possibility of the emergence of Renaissance realism in Byzantine iconography.[36] Icons then represent no particular fleeting phenomenon, but an eternal idea. The unique Byzantine iconographic technique is explained on this Platonic basis. The golden radiating background replacing three-dimensional space, the weightless figures, the light buildings, the reverse perspective—everything enhances the "unrealism" of the transcendental world and expresses this eternal idea. However, the Platonic interpretation of Eastern Christian icons does not agree with the texts of the icon apologists who witnessed the Byzantine iconoclastic unrest. There is, at least, no agreement among art historians, who work with the texts of the Byzantine iconoclastic era, regarding Plato's role in the Byzantine iconoclastic debates: should one associate Plato with the iconophiles or iconoclasts?

Florovsky pioneered the revision of Plato's role in the Byzantine iconoclastic controversies. He noticed that the iconophiles' understanding of the historic

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[35] V.N. Lazarev, *Istorija vizantijskoi zhivopisi* [The history of Byzantine painting] (M.: "Iskusstvo," 1986); Gervase Mathew, *Byzantine Aesthetics* (New York : Viking Press, 1963).
[36] V.N. Lazarev, *Istorija vizantijskoi zhivopisi*, 18.

Incarnation led them to speak "precisely of the 'images' of some 'earthly' realities, as it were, of historic personalities, who lived in time on earth," but not "simply of 'images' of some 'eternal' or 'heavenly' realities."[37] Such empirical, historical realism, which has been the foundation of the defense of icons, makes it impossible to associate iconography with Plato. On the contrary, the platonic interpretation seems instead to belong to the iconoclasts:

> The main issue was between symbolism and history. The Iconoclasts represented in the conflict an un-reformed and uncompromising Hellenic position, of an Origenistic and Platonic Trend.[38]

There has been little agreement about Plato's role in the iconoclastic debates and his attitude toward the image, even among those scholars who based their research not only on the visual aesthetics of images but also on the texts of the Byzantine debates. For example, Ladner, who focused on the doctrines themselves, attributed a Platonic heritage to iconophiles rather than iconoclasts. He traced the evolution of the orthodox Byzantine idea of image as:

> …the transfer of the image concept from the sensible to the intellectual realm, a long process traceable in Hellenistic and Early Christian thought

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[37] George Florovsky, "Origen, Eusebius and the Iconoclastic Controversy," *Church History* 19 (1950) (2, Jun): 77-96, 94.
[38] Ibid., 96.

> from Plato to Philo and St. Paul, and from Plotinus and Proclus to Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite and St. John of Damascus.[39]

Trying to find Plato's place in the Byzantine iconoclastic debates, Ladner does accept that in Plato's Phaedrus, the pictorial image has an inferior position—it is "three times removed from the truth." However, he continues:

> Now if Plato had stopped here, he would, perhaps, have to be considered the forerunner of the Byzantine iconoclasts rather than of the iconophiles. But it must always be remembered that Platonism has two sides. Even in Plato's own late dialogues one finds a conception of images, both natural and artistic, which is not altogether derogatory.[40]

Ladner associates Plato with iconophiles on the basis that Plato did appreciate some kinds of images such as *kosmos*, "the perfect image of an eternal *paradigm*."[41]

Ladner's claims are the opposite of Florovsky's. Florovsky insists that it was the iconoclasts who continued Plato's and Origen's "symbolic" trend—a trend in conflict with the "historic" realism of the iconophiles. He and other researchers observe that the iconoclasts did not oppose just *any* image.[42] Indeed, iconoclasm and image are not mutually exclusive concepts. Thus Plato's support of some types of images, which Ladner sees as a confirmation of the iconophiles' link to Plato, does not necessarily separate Plato from the iconoclasts. Moreover, the iconoclasts themselves did not oppose just any image; they differentiated between true images and derogatory images. This differentiation between two kinds of images, with a particular appreciation for the immaterial, shows an iconoclastic connection to Platonic theory. A bond between the iconoclasts and Plato has also been suggested in Alexander's reading of the texts of the Second Iconoclastic Council and, even more openly, in Anastos' later criticism of Alexander's idea of the originality of the Second Iconoclastic Council in comparison with the First.

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[39] Gerhart B. Ladner, "The Concept of the Image in the Greek Fathers and the Byzantine Iconoclastic Controversy," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 7 (1953): 1-34, 6.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Paul J. Alexander, "The Iconoclastic Council of St. Sophia (815) and Its Definitions (Horos)," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 7 (1953): 35-66; Milton V. Anastos, "The Ethical Theory of Images Formulated by the Iconoclasts in 754 and 815," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 8 (1954): 151-160; Breckenridge, James D. "The Iconoclasts' Image of Christ," *Gesta.* 11 (2) (1972): 3-8; George Florovsky, "Origen, Eusebius and the Iconoclastic Controversy," *Church History* 19 (2, Jun) (1950): 77-96.

For the early iconoclasts of the eighth century, the only true image was the Eucharist. During the second period of iconoclasm, in the ninth century, the true image was proclaimed to be "Man endowed with the Christian virtues."[43] The only genuine representation of the saints was the imitation of their virtues and the accomplishment of their commandments. So "pictures of Christ and of the saints are 'spurious,' and the only true image is the virtuous Christian worshipping God in his heart."[44] So Alexander associates the iconoclasts of the Second Council with Hellenistic mentality and Origenism.

Later, Anastos did a detailed analysis of both iconoclastic Councils to prove that this "ethical" theory of the image, as he called it, already existed at the First Iconoclastic Council.[45] Six of the eight parts of this Council dealt with ethical aspects. The text calls for remembering God in one's heart: "to enjoy the presence of the saints in their writings" (with words being images of saints' souls), and to study holy writings which are the "living images of a godly life and the inspiration for the emulation of god-like behavior. "[46] Finally, it calls for imitating the virtues of the saints rather than putting one's trust in a physical face. The sixteenth anathema of the First Iconoclastic Council condemns all those who set up dead images of saints with material colors, rather than reproducing their virtues as living images. Similarly, the Second Iconoclastic Council advises keeping Logos in one's soul, holding likenesses in one's heart, following the commandments as images for imitation, and being reminded of the saints with written records rather than colors. Anastos concludes that this ethical theory of image influenced the Byzantine Iconoclasm of both periods.

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[43] Paul J. Alexander, "The Iconoclastic Council of St. Sophia (815) and Its Definitions (Horos)," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 7 (1953): 35-66, 44.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Milton V Anastos, "The Ethical Theory of Images Formulated by the Iconoclasts in 754 and 815," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 8 (1954): 151-160, 159.

Researchers who have directed their attention to iconoclastic texts have realized that the Byzantine iconoclasts promoted an immaterial concept of image. This concept confirms the hypothesis that iconoclasm does not completely condemn the notion of an image. Instead, the Byzantine iconoclasts, taking their direction from Plato, differentiated between the true, immaterial representation, on the one hand, and the spurious representation, on the other.

Derrida's reading of Plato: Platonic oppositions

Derrida's analysis of Plato's dialogues also associates Plato with, what I call, the iconoclastic attitude—an aversion to exteriorization. I will show that the iconoclasts attacked icons precisely on Platonic grounds. They viewed with contempt external "dead colors," as opposed to living "inner" images, which they regarded as the only true images. That opposition between the external and the internal runs throughout their arguments, just as it does in Plato's dialogues.

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[46] Ibid., 154-155.

Derrida identifies various oppositions in Plato's dialogues. They include: representation versus presence; image versus reality; good versus evil; true versus false; essence versus appearance; father versus son; sensible versus mental; and living versus dead. One part in each of these oppositions is always external to the other, all being reduced to the basic tension between the inside and the outside, or the internal and the external, the signifier and the signified. Derrida explains the metaphysical logic of Plato's dialogues:

> …metaphysics consists of excluding non-presence by determining the supplement as *simple exteriority*, pure addition or pure absence. The work of exclusion operates within the structure of supplementarity. The paradox is that one annuls addition by considering it a pure addition. *What is added is nothing because it is added to full presence to which it is exterior.*[47]

In particular, according to Derrida's interpretation of Plato, writing is an addition to speech, while the visual image is an addition to its proto-image.

In the metaphysical tradition, writing and painting do not belong to the inner system; they are outsiders or signifiers, clothing an inner system. Hence the graphical image (whether it be writing or painting) can be easily excluded without any damage to reality. The inner system is self-sufficient, while the outside is secondary and dependent. The value of the outside, the image, is determined by how well it represents its inner referent, or the truth—its value steadily diminished by how far "removed" it is from the truth.

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[47] Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1974), 167.

This, perhaps, clarifies how the iconoclastic concept of the image as referring to something inner is related to Plato, who also favored the internal as opposed to the external. In the metaphysical tradition, as Derrida notes, the tension between speech and writing takes the form of a conflict between two types of writing: good writing inscribed into the soul and bad, external writing, removed from the inner truth. While Derrida mostly focuses on writing (grapheme) rather than pictorial images (zoographeme), Plato does explicitly point out an analogy between writing and painting, and Derrida does not overlook that connection:

> ...writing and painting are convoked together, summoned to appear with their hands tied, before the tribunal of *logos,* and to respond to it, this is quite simply because both are being *interrogated*...[48]

The controversy of the live *logos* versus dead writing, which is Derrida's main theme, is an example of a general opposition between the inside and the outside, the opposition which runs throughout all the arguments of the Byzantine iconoclasts—the inner immaterial images and the external dead images, including icons. For example, the iconoclasts stated:

> If anyone endeavours to reinstate the effigies of the saints in inanimate and speechless icons made of material colors, which bring no benefit—for the

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[48] Jacques Derrida, "Plato's Pharmacy," in Jacues Derrida, *Dissemination* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 136.

> idea [of the icon] is vain and an invention of diabolic cunning—and does not rather reproduce in himself their virtues through what has been written about them in books, like animate icons, consequently to incite in himself the zeal to become like them, as our Fathers inspired by God have said, let him be anathema.[49]

Speech is always in a favored position in Plato's dialogues. It is curious, why speech does not share the fault of writing and painting. The structure of the oppositions—signifier versus signified—associates speech and writing with a signifier of the truth. Derrida explains Plato's position: speech or *logos* is alive, because its "father" (the speaking subject) attends to it. In spite of the fact that speech is only a signifier of the truth, it is alive. The live *logos* is present in the speaking subject. And what is very important is that to the extent that there is a speaking subject, there is no danger of replacement of live speech by dead writing. What is speech without its father?—just a dead writing endangered by violent subversion.[50] There is no need for the speaking subject while there is a written version of a speech (writing). This way a dead writing replaces a live speaking subject. Similarly, the theme of replacement was a main argument of the Byzantine iconoclasts in their attack on icons. They called icons idols. By idolatry iconoclasts implied the replacement of the living God by dead visual representations.

Still worse; painting is even more dangerous than writing in this sense of replacement, possessing an innate ability to mime the truth. Mimesis provides us with images of uncertain status, not alive and not completely dead—"a living-dead, a reprieved corpse, a deferred life, a semblance of breath."[51] Painting produces phantoms; the magical effect of imitation is a product that seems alive, but, of course, is not. Derrida explains:

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[49] Daniel J. Sahas, *Icon and Logos: Sources in Eighth-Century Iconoclasm* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), 160.

[50] Derrida, " Plato's Pharmacy," 136.

> The magic of writing and painting is like a cosmetic concealing the dead under the appearance of the living. The *pharmakon* introduces and harbors death. It makes the corpse presentable, masks it, makes it up, perfumes it with its essence, as it is said in Aeschylus. *Pharmakon* is also a word for perfume. A perfume without essence … a drug without substance. It transforms order into ornament, the cosmos into a cosmetic.[52]

The work of art replaces the original. Mimesis worsens the situation by making the dead copy seem alive.

In the Platonic tradition, the pictorial image has little value for it is not even a copy but a simulation of a copy. Speaking of the nature of imitation, Derrida refers to Plato's well known example of painting a bed.[53] The painter is three times removed from the truth. He is, first, far away from God (or "a god" in Plato's time), the real creator and true father of the bed or, more precisely, of "the clinical *eidos*" of bed. He is not a carpenter, the Demiurge of the bed. A painter is only an imitator. Finally, he is not able to produce "the being-true." Image is a representation. It may add nothing except itself, because it merely adds to fullness, to presence; that is to say that the painter's image acts only as a supplement. Similarly, the iconoclasts stressed the uselessness of dead material icons, as opposed to the example set by so-called animate icons like virtues.[54]

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[51] Ibid., 143.
[52] Ibid., 142.
[53] Ibid., 138.

Derrida's reading of Plato supports my hypothesis that the Byzantine iconoclasts attacked icons on a Platonic basis. They built their arguments on the Platonic opposition between good images and bad images. So, let us now continue to examine Plato, paying even further attention to his oppositions.

Plato's attitude toward the image: Platonic oppositions

In *Laws*, the opposition between good and bad images is expressed as the opposition between the dead and living images of the gods. In this respect, Plato sets apart two kinds of sacred objects: lifeless images, such as statues raised in honor of the gods; and living, sacred images, such as parents. He argues that while adoration of lifeless statues may be pleasant for gods,[55] the most honorable and powerful images are living parents and grandparents. Lifeless images only represent gods; they do not share the reality of their admirers and are useless in people's prayers. Live sacred images—parents and other ancestors—can, on the other hand, join people in their prayers; they truly deserve adoration.

In *Theaetetus*, the opposition between good and bad images finds still another expression: those images imprinted on the heart and those images of the outer world:

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[54] Daniel J. Sahas, *Icon and Logos: Sources in Eight-Century Iconoclasm* , 160.
[55] Plato, *Laws*, trans. Benjamin Jowett (New York: Prometheus Books, 2000): 271-272.

> But consider someone who once saw something and came to have knowledge of what he saw: isn't it the case that, with his eyes closed, he remembers it without seeing it?[56]

Inner impressions are imprinted on the heart as on a piece of wax. People skilled at learning, with well-trained memories, have hearts of good wax, capable of preserving a faithful impression. In *The Republic*, Plato even calls all those who have no such inner vision, no clear pattern in their souls, blind. These unfortunates are unable to establish the rules of beauty, justice and goodness, and Plato compares them to painters.[57] He trusts inner impressions more than those impressions seen through the eyes. Distorted reflections in water, the variable appearance of things depending on the distance from the eye, the concave and convex appearance of things—all these phenomena illustrate that eyesight provides us with nothing but appearances rather than true knowledge. The visual images around us are important only in so far as they express the inner order of things:

> As it is, the sight of day and night, the months and returning years, the equinoxes and solstices, has caused the invention of number, given us the notion of time, and made us inquire into the nature of the universe; thence we have derived philosophy, the greatest gift gods have ever given or will give to mortals.[58]

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[56] Plato, *Theaetetus* (New York: Penguin Books, 1987), 52.

[57] Plato, *The Republic,* ed. G.R.E. Ferrari, trans. Tom Griffith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 186-187.

[58] Plato, *Timaeus and Critias*, trans. Desmond Lee (New York: Penguin Books, 1986), 65.

Plato believes that some images "can be seen only through thinking."[59] External visual images are only representations, only the exteriorization of some inner order. They inevitably have a subordinate status; as "a moving shadow of something else,"[60] they are never fully real.[61]

If visual images of the outer world are so inferior, pictorial images, according to the Platonic argument, are still worse. When the philosopher turns to the subject of painting, the opposition between bad and good images becomes even tenser. Here it is an opposition between a painting and an idea: "In that case," Plato explains, "I would imagine, the art of imitation is a far cry from truth."[62] An artist merely *imitates* that which *represents* the idea of a thing. Thus the artist stands even farther from truth than the craftsman. What the artist creates is just an appearance, a phantasm, or a simulacrum. Plato, calling the artist simply an "imitator," compares him to a sophist who imitates and cheats. That artist though can cheat only children, making them think that he creates a thing, while, in reality, he creates only the appearance of a thing.

Plato continues that an artist is able to imitate the appearance of a thing without any knowledge of its essence. For example, an artist can paint an artisan at work, without having any knowledge of that artisan's craft:

> In every sphere there are these three skills—using, making and imitation … So the goodness, beauty and correctness of any manufactured object, living

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[59] Plato, *The Republic,* 218.
[60] Plato, *Theaetetus*, 72.
[61] Ibid., 40.
[62] Plato, *The Republic*, 217.

> thing or action are entirely a question of the use for which each of them was made, or for which it developed naturally … In which case, it's the person who uses a particular object who must necessarily have the most experience of it. He must act as a messenger to the person who makes, telling him the good and bad points, in use, of the instrument he is using.[63]

To make a truthful imitation, one thus should be familiar with the original itself. To paint a shoemaker, a painter must know what shoemaking is. Plato's *Laws* gives a detailed description of a "truthful imitation:"

> I mean, for example, whether a statue has the true proportions of a body, and the true situation of the parts; what those proportions are, and how the parts fit into one another in due order; also their colors and conformations … he who is to be a competent judge must possess three things;—he must know, in the first place, of what imitation is, secondly, he must know that it is true; and thirdly, that it has been well executed…[64]

In *Sophist*, we encounter another opposition between bad and good images. It is the opposition between likeness-making and appearance-making.[65] Likeness-making preserves the true proportions, the correspondence of the parts and the right colors. Appearance-making, though, only seems to keep the true proportions, but in reality it does not. For instance, in certain large pictures, proportions are distorted in order to imitate reality. How an appearance-made picture looks depends on the observer's viewpoint. Likeness-making, therefore is closer to the truth than appearance-making, which, as its name suggests, only appears to be.

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[63] Ibid., 321.

[64] Ibid., 121.

[65] Plato, *Sophist,* trans. Nicholas P. White (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Press, 1993).

In his dialogues, Plato does not rebuke all images; he only discriminates amongst images of different value. To see the nature of this proposed distinction between good and bad images in more detail, we can turn to Deleuze, whose starting point is also Plato's oppositions between essence and appearance; intelligibility and sensibility; idea and image; and original and copy.[66]

Deleuze stresses that a more profound Platonic distinction between the original and the image is that between two types of images: copies and simulacra (phantasms).[67] Copies are good images due to their resemblance to the model. Thus likeness-making is considered by Plato to be true copying because it carefully keeps the proportions of the model.[68] The true proportions and the true situation of the parts imply an internal relationship with the model and even with the idea of the model. As Deleuze notes: "The pretender conforms to the object only insofar as he is modeled (internally and spiritually) on the Idea."[69] Copies (likeness-making), therefore, are internally related to the model, while simulacra (appearance-making) are external to the model. Again, an artist is able to paint a shoemaker only if he knows what shoemaking is. In other words, he should be familiar with the idea of the model itself, not just with the appearance of the shoemaker.

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[66] Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, trans. Mark Lester and Charles Stivale (London: Continuum, 2004), 256.
[67] Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (London: Continuum, 2004), 126-127.
[68] Plato, *Sophist*.
[69] Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 257.

From this perspective, it becomes clearer why Plato criticizes writing and painting as copying without knowledge. Copying without knowledge can only produce phantasms and simulacra and such imitation fails to attend to the Idea. Simulacra, returning to the notion of the father in the presence of his *logos*, do not share an internal relationship with the father; simulacra only simulate appearance and are dangerous because of the violent subversion of the father.

Deleuze's description of the good image, which "stands in an internal, spiritual, noological and ontological relation with the Idea or model,"[70] also clarifies Plato's example with parents as the most potent sacred image. Living ancestors are images superior to the dead statues raised in honor of the gods. The statues possess only an external resemblance, while the parents enter in a spiritual and ontological relation with those gods.

This particular distinction between good images as copies and bad images as phantasms or simulacra also runs throughout most of Plato's dialogues. In *Phaedrus*, *logos* stands in an internal relation with its father, a speaking subject, while writing (a phantasm) only imitates speech. The same distinction appears in Plato's *Sophist*, where likeness-making is referred to as a true copy and appearance-making as a fake copy, a phantasm or simulacrum. From this perspective, Plato's early dialogues are consistent with his later ones. The fact that his later dialogues distinguish good images (copies that are in an internal relationship with their originals) from bad (phantasms that imitate appearance and miss the Idea) shows the link between his philosophy and the beliefs of the iconoclasts that would follow. That opposition of good and bad images—those that are living rather than dead; internal rather than external; true rather than false; natural rather than supplemental—is the bond between Plato and the Byzantine iconoclasts. The Byzantine iconoclasts also praised the notion of living natural images over dead pictorial images (icons). Likewise, they too promoted those images that had an internal resemblance to their originals, including the virtues of the saints, examples which could be imitated by their followers. Icons though were spurious because they held only an external resemblance to their originals.

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[70] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 264.

This Platonic distinction between images and simulacra is outlined still further in Baudrillard's claim of "a profusion of images where there is nothing to see."[71] Baudrillard believes that contemporary images fail to represent reality. Instead, the images themselves become their own "virtual reality."[72] In other words, contemporary images simulate reality.[73] They too fail to attend to the idea. As an analogy, Baudrillard directly refers to the example set by the Byzantine iconoclasts:

> But what becomes of the divinity when it reveals itself in icons, when it is multiplied in simulacra? Does it remain the supreme power that is simply incarnated in images as a visible theology? Or does it volatilize itself in the simulacra that, alone, deploy their power and pomp of fascination—the visible machinery of icons substituted for the pure and intelligible idea of God? … one can say that the icon worshippers were the most modern minds,

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[71] Jean Baudrillard, *Art and Artefact*, ed. Nicholas Zurbrugg (Sage Publications: London, 1997), 12.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Baudrillard, *Art and Artefact;* Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation,* trans. Sheila Faria Glaser (Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, 1994); Jean.Baudrillard, *Transparency of the Evil*, trans. James Benedict (New York: Verso, 1993).

> the most adventurous, in the guise of having God become apparent in the mirror of images, they were already enacting his death and his disappearance in the epiphany of his representations…[74]

The visual representations of God have replaced God. There is then no need for the pure intelligible idea for which the icon stands as a material substitute. This is an act of sacrilege from the iconoclastic perspective, which assigns the visual image an inferior status: it is an idol attempting to replace God, a simulacrum simulating and substituting the pure idea (Plato, Baudrillard). What else could one expect, an iconoclast might ask, from an image that has only an external resemblance to the original, lacking an ontological link to that original?

Marx offers another theory dealing with the notion of replacing something vital and essential with the external and artificial. His theory brings back the Platonic opposition between the external (a fetish or an alienated product of human brains and hands) and the internal (human relationships). Marx's resistance to exteriorization and alienation and his association of the estranged human by-products with phantoms (which seem to be independent, objective and real), in fact, led Derrida to link Marx's thinking, as well, with the Platonic tradition:

> In their common denunciation, in what is at once most critical and ontological about it, Marx and Saint Max are also heirs to the Platonic tradition, more precisely to the one that associates in a strict fashion image

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[74] Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, 4-5.

with specter, and idol with phantasm, with the phantasma in its phantomatic or errant dimension as living-dead.[75]

The Byzantine iconophiles actually overcame the logic of replacement, substitution and simulation. In their defense of the icons of Christ, they develop an elaborate theory of sameness and difference related to the image of the person and the person, him- or herself. The icon of Christ is not able, according to the iconophiles, to replace Christ since it is identical with Christ in name and hypostasis. It is impossible to replace that which is identical. Does not this association, however, of an image with its proto-image lead to idolatry? The iconophiles never claimed absolute identicalness. The icon of Christ is different from Christ in essence. The essence of an icon is wood, which is different from the nature of what is represented. The sameness in name and hypostasis and difference in essence excluded even the possibility of replacing a person with his or her visual image.

Marx's attitude toward representations

Marx would not likely have bothered himself with questions such as "what does the image of Christ represent?" or more generally "what do we see when looking at the image of a person?" He would probably have dismissed these questions as belonging to the realm of mere speculation. Instead, Marx trusted the empirical observations of the life-process "without any mystification and speculation."[76] The subject represented in an image is not an issue in his analysis. Concepts, images, and religious figures are associated here with the sphere of so-called "mental production"—they are the by-products of material processes. Concepts are not reality. Moreover, the image is a distorted form of these material relationships. Within mental by-products, material relationships are projected upside down, just as they are, Marx elaborates, in a camera obscura.[77] Images are phantoms. A phantom is something that has an appearance (a phantom appears) but does not have an ontological body. Images also lack history. "The phantoms formed in the human brain, too, are necessary sublimations," he explains, "of man's material life-process which is empirically verifiable and connected with material premises."[78] Marx is attempting to demystify those phantoms and their enigmatic character; the illusion that they are independent of people. Citing the distorted form of material relationships, Marx makes the focus of his analysis not "what men say, imagine or conceive," but men's "actual life-process."[79] I will approach Marx's attitude toward the image through his analysis of commodities.

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[75] Jacques Derrida, *The Specters of Marx,* trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York and London: Routledge, 1994), 147.

[76] Karl Marx, Loyd David Easton, and Kurt H. Guddat, *Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society* (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1967), 413.

Commodities start to move about freely in society as if they were alive, Marx argues, although they are dead. He opposes any mysticism, so he is understandably concerned with the enigmatic way the products of labor assume their own value and move within the market independent of their producer. First, there is the use-value, which, of course, is not so mysterious. It is, after all, only ordinary to transform a natural material to satisfy a human need. But there is also the enigmatic exchange value. The product of labor assumes this value in the market where—"the equality of the kinds of human labor takes on a physical form in the equal objectivity of the products of labor as values."[80]

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[77] Ibid., 414.
[78] Ibid., 415.
[79] Ibid.

At the beginning of his *Capital*, Marx states "that the mystical character of the commodity does not therefore arise from its use-value," but from the commodity form itself.[81] Products meet each other in the market and only in their exchange do they assume value. The relationships between living people, the producers, are replaced by the relationships between the products of labor. The producers do not come into any contact until they exchange the products of their labor. The enigmatic character of commodities is concealed in this process of exchange-value, but Marx goes even further, claiming that the possibility of mysticism is already present even in use-value. A useful thing may be used by someone else.[82] In this respect, the very first stage of mysticism is an exteriorization of human labor. Only through exteriorization may human activity be expropriated by someone else: "the externality of labor for the worker manifests itself in the fact that it is not his own but someone else's, that it does not belong to him, that in it he belongs not to himself but to someone else."[83] Human labor transforms into an object in the form of the product of labor. The product of labor is estranged from the producer. As a result, the worker encounters the product of his own labor as a foreign thing. It becomes estranged and hostile to its own producer.

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[80] Karl Marx, *Capital. Vol. 1: A Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Ben Fowkes (London, New York: Penguin Books Ltd., 1990), 164.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Ibid., 166.
[83] Marx, *Early Political Writings*, 74.

Marx concludes his analysis of the "fantastic form of a relation between things"—objectification, estrangement, and alienation—with an analogy to religion:

> Just as in religion, the activity of man's imagination, of the human head and heart, operates on the individual as something independent of him, i.e. as an alien activity of gods or devils, so the worker's activity is not his self-activity. It belongs to another and is his loss of self.[84]

A similar comparison is given in *Capital*:

> …in order, therefore, to find an analogy we must take flight into the misty realm of religion. There the products of the human brain appear as autonomous figures endowed with a life of their own, which enter into relations both with each other and with the human race.[85]

What troubles Marx about the estranged products of human activity is the enigmatic character they assume. They appear to be objective, independent and alien to their own producers. Marx attempts to demystify the estrangement of commodities—they are nothing else, in his opinion, than the objectification of human labor estranged from the producer. Similarly, the religious realm is nothing else but the objectification of men's imagination estranged from men.

Marx's theory of "the self-estrangement of man from himself"[86] implies a particular attitude toward the visual image. Image is never taken as a self-sufficient object of analysis. A painting is the product of the artist's imagination. It is something an artist, in Marx's words, "expends of himself."[87] It is the extension of the artist's self. One should then focus on the producer of an image and his life process, rather than the product. One should be careful not to be distracted by the mystic character the thing assumes: there is no sense in taking, for example, a painting as an objective thing alien of its producer. From this perspective, there is no principle difference between the concepts of two images as different as, say, *The Saviour "not-made-by-hands"* and Grunewald's *Eisenheim Altar*. According to the Marxist line of thought, both paintings are the products of human imagination, or the extension of the artists' self. In my fourth chapter, I will show that the extension of the artist's self is a feature of a particular cultural and historical context. In fact, it goes back as far as the European Gothic tradition. Yet, Eastern Christian icons are rooted in a completely different concept of image. For example, the Seventh Ecumenical Council, which reinstated the worship of icons after the first period of Byzantine Iconoclasm, produced the following regulation, regarding the role of the iconographer in icon-painting:

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[84] Ibid.
[85] Marx, *Capital. Vol,* 165.
[86] Marx, *Early Political Writings*, 56.

> The making of icons is not an invention of the painters but an accepted institution and tradition of the catholic Church; and that which excels in antiquity is worthy of respect, according to the divine Basil. Antiquity itself and teaching of our Fathers, who bear within themselves the Spirit, testify that they [the Fathers] were gratified to see icons inside the venerable churches. ... The idea, therefore, and the tradition are theirs, not the painter's.

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[87] Ibid., 72.

> Only the art is of the painter, whereas the disposition is certainly of the holy Fathers who erected [churches].[88]

The Byzantine *vitas* of the saints also stress the reduced role of the iconographers in icon-painting, so that icons are hardly a mental production of an artist. Neither the artists' will nor their imagination played any important role. Looking at the texts of the Seventh Ecumenical Council and the *vitas* of the saints, we meet a different concept of image—the image is linked with its proto-image, rather than the artist's imagination. Marx's theory of estrangement does not distinguish between the different concepts of visual image—all of the images are products of men's imagination and their life-processes.

Marx's theory of alienation presents a unique approach to the idea of the person. In his analysis of commodities and "the misty realm of religion," he opposes any human exteriorization, whether it is expressed as the product of human labor, which is alienated from the worker, or the product of men's imagination, which, Marx argues, includes religion:

> In religion the spontaneity of human imagination, the spontaneity of human brain and heart, acts independently of the individual as an alien, divine or devilish activity. Similarly, the activity of the worker is not his own spontaneous activity. It belongs to another. It is the loss of his own self.[89]

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[88] Sahas, *Icon and Logos*, 84.
[89] Marx, *Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society*, 292.

> Given this fact, it is clear that the more the worker expends of himself, the more powerful becomes the alien world of objects he creates over against himself, the poorer he himself—his own inner world—becomes, the less he has to call his own. It is exactly the same as religion. The more man puts into God, the less he keeps in himself. The worker puts his life into the object, but then it no longer belongs to him but to the object. The greater this activity, the more the worker is bereft of objects. What the product of his labor is, that he is not. So the greater this product, the less he is himself. The alienation of the worker in his product means no only that his labor becomes an object, an external existence, but that that it becomes external to him, independent, alien to him, and independent power that confronts him; the life he gives to the object confronts him, hostile and alien.[90]

Marx's theory of alienation implies some human essence that exteriorizes, objectifies and estranges itself in the form of objects. In his early writings, Marx opposes that exteriorization of human essence—he expresses this as the loss of one's self. This opposition to exteriorization of human essence was, however, nothing new. The Byzantine iconoclasts opposed the icons on a similar basis. They claimed:

> What is this senseless contrition on the part of the painter of caricatures who, for the sake of cheap profiteering, has occupied himself in doing something

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[90] Marx, *Early Political Writings*, 72.

> that cannot be done, that is, with profane hands giving form to things that are believed with the heart and confessed with the mouth?[91]

Similar to Marx's line of thought, the iconoclasts opposed expressing in the icon that which should be kept in "the heart and confessed with the mouth"—the internal, in other words, should be kept internal and not exteriorized in any way.

Byzantine Iconoclasts: the essentialist concept of image

In 754 the iconoclastic Council of Hieria placed a strict ban on icons, making it the subject of royal law:

> No man should ever attempt to occupy himself with such an impious and unholy endeavor. He who from now on attempts to make an icon, or to venerate one, or to set one up in a church or in a private home, or to hide one, if [he be] bishop, presbyter, or deacon, let him be unfrocked; if monk or layman, let him be anathematized and subjected to the royal laws, as an opponent of the commandments of God and an enemy of the Fathers.[92]

What were icons to the Byzantine iconoclasts? And what did icon-worshipping look like in their eyes? Few texts by the iconoclasts survived the defeat of their movement in the Byzantine Empire.[93] However, the iconoclasts were extensively quoted by iconophiles in their apologies for the images, again most notably at the Seventh Ecumenical Council[94] and by some individual iconophiles as well.[95] The following analysis will be based on those texts.

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[91] Sahas, *Icon and Logos: Sources in Eight-Century Iconoclasm* , 81.
[92] Sahas, *Icon and Logos: Sources in Eight-Century Iconoclasm*; Philip Scharff and Henry Wace, eds. *Nicene and Post-nicene Fathers.* Vol. 14. Second series (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), 147.
[93] Leslie Brubaker and John Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era (ca 680-850): the Sources* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001).

The treatises of iconophile John of Damascus, a prominent defender of images during the first period of Iconoclasm, show that the iconoclasts based their critique of icons on the Old Testament prohibition against making any likeness:

> But those, who do not search out the meaning of Scripture, say that God said through Moses the lawgiver, 'Do not make any likeness, whether of things in heaven or of things on the earth,' and through David the prophet, 'Let those who venerate carved [images] be put to shame, those who boast in their idols,' and many other similar passages.[96]

The iconoclasts viewed icon-painting as a violation of that Old Testament prohibition—a prohibition against idols.

The icon of Christ attempts to replace Christ and thus to cause idolatry. Constantine V, an iconoclastic emperor, saw the only possible solution—the icon should be identical with its original in essence: "a good representation is essentially identical with the represented."[97] Representation should not be *like* the original, but rather be *essentially the same*. Only then would there be no risk of substitution, no chance of idolatry. But this narrowed down the choice of acceptable representations to the extent that for Constantine V, the only possible icon of Christ was the Eucharist. As he insists:

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[94] Sahas, *Icon and Logos: Sources in Eight-Century Iconoclasm;* Scharff, *Nicene and Post-nicene Fathers.*

[95] John of Damascus, *Three Treatises on the Devine Images,* trans. Adrew Louth (New York: Saint Vladimir Seminar Press, 2003); Nikifor Arkhiepiskop Konstantinipol'skii, *Tvorenija svjatogo ottsa nashego Nikifora, arhiepiskopa konstantinopol'skogo.*

[96] John of Damascus, *Three Treatises on the Devine Images*, 62-63.

[97] Nikifor, *Tvorenija svjatogo ottsa nashego Nikifora, arhiepiskopa konstantinopol'skogo*, 339.

> It is the Celebrant Himself and God Who … handed this [icon] down to his initiates, at the time of his voluntary Passion, in place of [Himself] and as a most vivid remembrance [of Him]. … He commanded that the substance of bread be offered which does not yield the shape of a man's form, so that idolatry may not be introduced indirectly.[98]

With their demand of identicalness in essence, the iconoclasts prohibited using the name of the portrayed as a title of the portrait, since the two unavoidably have different essences. The iconoclasts accused the iconophiles, saying that:

> …the aforesaid creator of evil … he introduced idolatry unnoticeably by convincing, with his subtleties, those who had their eyes turned to him not to relinquish the creation but rather to adore it, and pay respect to it, and consider that which is made as God, calling it with the name 'Christ'.[99]

There is, in fact, only one case of this similarity of essence recognized by the iconoclasts, where the same name may be applied to a portrait and the portrayed. However, a portrait is not identical in essence to the portrayed. The iconoclastic emperor Constantine V denied, therefore, the icon of Christ on the basis that the essence of the material icon is different from that of the living God.[100] An icon, according to this line of thinking, is simply a dead idol, not an image of the living God.

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[98] Sahas, *Icon and Logos,* 93.
[99] Ibid., 62.
[100] Nikifor, *Tvorenija svjatogo ottsa nashego Nikifora, arhiepiskopa konstantinopol'skogo*, 371.

The argument that only that which is alive can represent a living being is not exclusive, though, to the Byzantine iconoclasts; it was a common belief in the Muslim world at that time as well. A Syrian Melchite bishop, Abu Qurrah in his defense of representative art, for example, disapprovingly cites a Muslim argument that if an artisan dares to make an image of a living being, he should be prepared to bring that image to life: "it is not God's will that believers in Him are not to make for themselves likenesses or icons. A rebuke is due to those who say that whoever makes a portrait of anything living will be required on resurrection day to blow the spirit into its portrait."[101] Schönborn mentions examples of that Islamic art, attempting to "animate" their representations of plants and animals. He, therefore, attributes the radical position of Constantine V to an Islamic rather than a Platonic, perspective.[102] Schönborn argues that although the Greeks regarded all pictorial representations as things quite inferior to originals, their disregard was much less stringent than Muslim standards, which argued that the only acceptable images are living ones—standards very similar to those followed by Constantine V.

However, the requirement of Constantine V to maintain a common sameness in essence between an image and the person represented does not contradict the Platonic understanding of images; it actually seems to spring from the Platonic tradition. Recall, for instance, Plato's advice to venerate parents more than statues, for parents are living sacred images of gods, while statues are dead images.[103] This shows both an understanding of the insufficiency of dead images and a wish to make the image as close as possible to the original in essence.

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[101] Thawdhūrus Abu Qurrah, *A Treatise on the Veneration of the Holy Icons,* trans. Sidney H. Griffith. (Louvain: Peeters, 1997), 53.

[102] Christoph Schönborn, cardinal Hubert Philipp Weber, *God's Human Face: The Christ Icon*, transl. Lothar Krauth (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1994), 158.

This desire, though, is understandably an impossible one and there are few, if any, fabricated images identical in essence to that which they are representing, assuming that the subject is a living being. The requirement of sameness in essence led the iconoclasts to an irreconcilable gap between dead images and living beings.[104] Everything manufactured is dead by definition and falls under the name of an idol. Thus the iconoclasts condemned the iconographers:

> …what is this senseless contrition on the part of the painter of caricatures who, for the sake of cheap profiteering, has occupied himself in doing something that cannot be done, that is, with profane hands…[105]

The iconoclastic arguments about the difference between the dead manufactured essence of the icon and the living God assigned an inferior status to everything material. Thus some arguments in favor of icons were based on a defense of the material in general. "Do not abuse matter; for it is not dishonorable; this is the view of Manichees," wrote John of Damascus, in his *Three Treatises on the Divine Images*, a kind of a hymn, in fact, to the material.[106]

Colors as dead matter are a common theme in the iconoclastic arguments against icons, which are inherently unable to represent the living God:

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[103] Plato, *Laws,* trans. Benjamin Jowett (New York: Prometheus Books, 2000), 271-272.
[104] Charles Barber, *Figure and Likeness: On the Limits of Representation in Byzantine Iconoclasm* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 56.
[105] Sahas, *Icon and Logos: Sources in Eight-Century Iconoclasm,* 81.
[106] John of Damascus, *Three Treatises on the Devine Images,* 30.

> If anyone endeavors to reinstate the effigies of the saints in inanimate and speechless icons made by material colors, which bring no benefit—for the idea [of the icon] is vain and an invention of diabolic cunning… let him be anathema.[107]

> If anyone endeavours, through material colors, to understand the divine impress of God the Word according to his incarnation …let him be anathema.[108]

> …he who thinks to reinstate them [the saints] on the poles, by means of a dead art which has never been alive but rather has been invented in vanity by the adversary pagans, proves himself blasphemous.[109]

Colors here are an improper means of representing a living spirit. What is dead can only represent that which is dead.

The opposition between the dead material of icons and the living God was expressed also as an antagonism between that which is worth remembering and that which is not. For instance, a corpse, the iconoclasts stressed, does not deserve to be remembered. Constantine V argues:

> Since that which concerns Christ dispersed and dissolved, it follows also which concerns the saints disappears at the same time, and that that which remains is not worth remembering.[110]

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[107] Sahas, *Icon and Logos: Sources in Eight-Century Iconoclasm*,, 87.
[108] Ibid., 154.
[109] Ibid., 103.

Icons are, therefore, still more useless since they are able to express only the futile appearance, which is not worth remembering: "we should not endeavour to depict on boards with colors the carnal faces of the saints; we do not need these."[111] The soul and spirit, which can only truly represent a saint and which are truly worthy of remembering, are not present in the icons.

The iconoclasts believed that the material technique of icononography is not able to represent the complex nature of a living being—the invisible (soul, the divinity) and the visible (body, appearance). The iconoclasts claimed:

> …it is an image of God and man, and consequently he [iconographer] has in his foolish mind, in his representation of the created flesh, depicted the Godhead which cannot be represented, and thus mingled what should not be mingled.[112]

The pictorial representation of likeness divides the complex nature of a living being, because it represents only the external, the visible part, failing to capture then the invisible. Constantine V thus insists on the impossibility of depicting the Divine.[113]

The iconoclasts insist that God is inexpressible:

> But in so far as the form of God is concerned, I do not myself think you would ask for that, once you have been instructed by Him; because neither

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[110] Charles Barber, "Writing on the Body: Memory, Desire, and the Holy in Iconoclasm," in *Desire and Denial in Byzantinum*, ed. Liz James (Brookfield: Ashgate, 1999).
[111] Sahas, *Icon and Logos: Sources in Eight-Century Iconoclasm,* 125.
[112] Scharff and Wace, eds. *Nicene and Post-nicene Fathers*, 543.
[113] Nikifor, *Tvorenija svjatogo ottsa nashego Nikifora, arhiepiskopa konstantinopol'skogo*, 376.

> has one known the Father, except the Son, nor will any one ever know even the Son Himself, except the Father alone, who gave birth to Him.[114]

The iconoclasts maintained that a portrait reduces God to a base material nature, a great dishonor to the deity. As Patriarch Nikephoros once remarked, they insisted that this inexpressibility of God is precisely what honors Him.[115]

What then is eligible for representation of a living being? What would a comprehensive image be? The Byzantine iconoclasts put forward their own concept of genuine images, causing some researchers to doubt their real status as iconoclasts. However, there does not seem to be any examples from history where *all* images were refused; such an absolute iconoclasm has probably never happened anywhere. So the Byzantine iconoclastic debates were not about the destruction of the images as such. The discussion revolved around the question, are pictorial images eligible for representation of *a living being*? The iconoclasts' response was negative. The iconoclasts proposed three types of images that may represent the invisible: symbolic, ethical and verbal.

I will start with symbolic images. How Christ could be represented—in symbolical or in the human form—was a significant demarcation point between the positions of the iconoclasts and iconophiles. Barber points out that the iconoclasts accepted the Orthodox tradition up until and including the Sixth Ecumenical Council (inclusive), and that they rejected the Quinisext Council, which prohibited symbolical representations of Christ,[116] in 692, four decades before the onset of the Byzantine iconoclasm.

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[114] Sahas, *Icon and Logos,* 134.

[115] Nikifor, *Tvorenija svjatogo ottsa nashego Nikifora, arhiepiskopa konstantinopol'skogo*, 382, 391.

The Quinisext Council distinguished between the portraits of Christ and symbolical representations of Christ:

> In some venerable icons, and pointed to by the finger of the Forerunner, there is the drawing of a lamb, which has been received as the figure of grace, making what is for us the true Lamb—Christ our God—glimmer through the Law. Although, therefore, we totally embrace the old forms and figures as symbols and foreshadowings which have been handed down to the Church, yet we prefer to honor Grace and truth, because we have welcomed this as the fulfillment of the Law. We, therefore, decree that the human figure of Christ, the Lamb of our God, who has taken away the sin of the world, be painted with colors as perfectly as possible, in view of everyone, and from now on be reinstated in icons in the place of the former lamb. This way we may perceive the height of the humility of God the Word, and be led to the remembrance of his conduct in flesh, his suffering, his redemptive death, and the salvation which resulted from it for the world.[117]

In contrast, the Iconoclast Council in Hieria accepted *only* symbolical representations: "the substance of bread be offered which does not yield the shape of a man's form, so that idolatry may not be introduced indirectly."[118] No human forms, no chance for idolatry—the substitution of the represented by a representation of likeliness.

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[116] Barber, *Figure and Likeness: On the Limits of Representation in Byzantine Iconoclasm,* 40-41.
[117] Sahas, *Icon and Logos: Sources in Eight-Century Iconoclasm,* 60-61.
[118] Sahas, *Icon and Logos: Sources in Eight-Century Iconoclasm,* 93.

Among the symbolic representations, the iconoclasts singled out the cross as a representation of Christ. The iconoclastic emperors (Leo III, Constantine V, Leo V) replaced icons of Christ with crosses at the prominent place of Chalke Gate before they announced their new iconoclastic policy. Barber reviews the five poems about the cross inscribed on the Chalke Gate in 815.[119] The first poem condemns an image of Christ "depicted … as a form … voiceless and bereft of breath in earthly matter" and appeals to the authority of the Old Testament.[120] The second poem promotes the image of God that is "Christ in gold … in the voice of the prophets" that prevents "the return to error of the makers of images."[121] The remaining three poems put forward similar oppositions—the cross and Logos versus dead material icons:

> O Logos, in order to strengthen the piety of those below, and to show a clear and more complete knowledge of yourself, you gave law that only the cross be depicted. You disown being pictured on the walls here by means of material artifice, as clearly now, as before.[122]

> Now the cross, the glory of the faithful, has stemmed the mighty current of deceit. For the soulless artificial form inscribed here, devised as a hidden weapon by an illicit impulse, has been completely taken away.[123]

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[119] Barber, *Figure and Likeness.*
[120] Ibid., 92-93.
[121] Ibid., 93.
[122] Ibid., 94.
[123] Ibid.

> O Logos, you gave us for our salvation the cross, the life-giving figure of the Passion, support of the faithful, and object of divine reverence. O Logos, you removed the erroneous icon that was previously shamefully inscribed here.[124]

In short, the iconoclasts accepted the cross as a symbolic representation of Christ, which overcomes the dead materiality of the icon. The cross does not represent Christ's external likeness, but it does possess a living connection with him. Traces of the Platonic line of thought exist here as well; the symbol of the cross attends to the idea, while the plain representation of appearance does not.

The iconoclasts also promoted ethical images. Regular iconography brings fourth idols—dead images. An icon is only dead matter, moreover representing a body that is only temporarily alive. The true image should be immaterial and it should represent something which lives forever. To this end the iconoclasts advocated virtues as "animated icons" of the soul, as opposed to dead icons of the body:

> We have received the tradition to revitalize the notions about the saints; not, however, on icons with colors which are material. Rather, we have been taught to refurbish their virtues, and, through what is said about them in writings, as if animate icons, stimulate ourselves towards the same zeal as theirs.[125]

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[124] Ibid., 95.
[125] Sahas, *Icon and Logos: Sources in Eight-Century Iconoclasm,* 132.

> If anyone endeavors to reinstate the effigies of the saints in inanimate and speechless icons made by material colors, which bring no benefit—for the idea [of the icon] is vain and an invention of diabolic cunning—and does not rather reproduce in himself their virtues through what has been written about them in books, like animate icons, consequently to incite in himself the zeal to become like them, as our Fathers inspired by God have said, let him be anathema.[126]

> …we should not endeavour to depict on boards with colors the carnal faces of the saints, we do not need these. What we need, instead, is to imitate their conduct through virtue.[127]

A listener himself is invited to imitate the virtues of the saints and to become "the animated icon."

Finally, iconoclasts also promoted verbal images. The biographies and deeds of the saints hereby become animated icons to those saints:

> We enjoy the presence of the saints through writings, thus having the icons not of their bodies but of their souls. For, what has been said by them are icons of their souls. The study of writings inspired by God, St. Basil said, is a most effective way of discovering what is proper. For in them one can find the deposits of the deeds as well as the biographies of blessed men, handed

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[126] Ibid., 161.
[127] Ibid., 125.

> down like animate icons of the conduct according to God, placed in front for the imitation of the works which are in accordance with the will of God.[128]

An iconoclastic patriarch, John the Grammarian, describes the true icon of a man:

> It is impossible for a man to be portrayed by any means, unless one has been led to this by words, through which everyone that exists is definitely captured. As the particularities of someone have both distinguished him from those of like form and drawn him near to them in another way, [it follows that] he cannot be grasped in any effective manner by appearance. For if the family of the father from which an individual derives are not depicted—bringing forth his deeds and that he is blessed in his companions and the rest of his manners, which are only clearly discernible in the words by means of which one might judge his praiseworthiness or blameworthiness—then the artwork is a waste of time. Hence, it is impossible truthfully to discern the man by such delineations.[129]

This passage is characteristic of the iconoclastic tradition: a person is properly represented by his soul, deeds, and manner. The true image of a person, therefore, can be provided only by symbols, virtues, deeds and words.

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[128] Ibid., 123.

[129] Charles Barber, "A Sufficient Knowledge: Icon and Body in Ninth-Century Byzantium," in *Interpreting Christian Art*, ed. Heidi Hornic and Mickeal C. Parsons (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2003), 66.

What is iconoclasm?

The Iconoclastic Council in Hieria prohibited icons of Christ, Theotocos and the saints. The iconoclasts stated there that one is not able to represent through visual means the complex nature of Christ; the divinity is unrepresentable. However, the ban on the icons of Theotocos and the saints required a different justification, since they were "people" and their nature was different from that of Christ. John the Grammarian explains this prohibition as stemming from the impossibility of grasping a person "in any effective manner by appearance."[130] Based on this argument the ban of the icons grew in scope to prohibit visual images representing any human likeness in general.

The iconophiles stood on a completely different theoretical ground. Icons do not misrepresent the complex nature of Christ, because icons, in fact, do not represent his nature at all. Nor do icons reduce a person to his or her appearance, since icons do not represent appearance either. The iconoclastic critique based on the uselessness of icons in grasping the essence of a person is also similarly flawed. Icons are not supposed to grasp anything in a person. Icons represent *hypostasis*—that which one sees when one looks at a person. Thus the Byzantine iconoclastic debates represent a dispute between the two completely different, irreconcilable attitudes toward the notion of person. The iconoclastic intent to grasp some essence of a person is linked to concept of identity. The iconophile approach of depicting that which one sees when looking at a person, rather than grasping something ephemeral within that person, is more reminiscent of the a person's photo ID, a notion where the visual aspect is the key.

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[130] Barber, "A Sufficient Knowledge: Icon and Body in Ninth-Century Byzantium," 66.

Many arguments similar to those raised by the Byzantine iconoclasts have appeared in various different contexts throughout history. For example, much of the initial reaction to the invention of photography—that initial distrust of a new means of representation—was iconoclastic in nature. Byzantine Iconoclasm, though, must be distinguished from other iconoclastic movements in importance. It is Byzantine Iconoclasm which provides the historical basis for understanding the iconoclastic phenomenon in general. The visual image was the central issue in this extensive historical event and it was, most definitely, exactly that, a "historic event": The iconoclastic debates were not a dispute among couch philosophers. They touched the everyday routine of an entire society. "Should we use icons in everyday prayers?" became a vital question to all Byzantines. Does an icon replace the one represented? What then are the relationships between the visual image and the person it represents? These questions, which are by no means trivial or simple, even to the contemporary researcher, required clear answers. Moreover, giving a wrong answer could bring a charge of heresy, accompanied by a severe sentence.

The policy of the iconoclastic emperors is illustrative of the role icons played in the Byzantine society.[131] The iconoclastic emperors could not simply place a ban on icons. They needed to summon a special council to support their wide enforcement of iconoclasm doctrine over the empire. In 730, when Leo III, the first iconoclastic emperor, had finally won the loyalty of his army, and achieved a relative degree of external stability, he summoned the Iconoclastic Council. Patriarch Germanus, however, refused to participate, believing the icon question could only be discussed at an ecumenical council. The Council convened anyway and affirmed iconoclasm. Germanus was replaced by Anastasius, who adopted iconoclastic views. All visual representations of Christ were banned. Schools where the supporters of the images taught were closed. Leo's son, Constantine V, sought to cement his father's iconoclastic policies, finally summoning, as emperor, an ecumenical council. Iconoclasm had existed in the empire for twenty year, but still it had never been approved by the ecumenical council demanded by Germanus, and therefore it lacked certain legitimacy. Indeed, Constantine cared so much for its results that even a military setback in Italy to the Lombards, costing him much of his empire's territories, failed to distract him; he continued unabated to seek canonical approval of his and his father's iconoclastic politics. However, the council he called together could hardly be described as ecumenical. The patriarch Anastasius had died just shortly before, so it was convened without the patriarch of Constantinople, the pope, or any of the eastern patriarchs. Still, over three hundred bishops did participate, and iconophile leaders were anathematized, while the former patriarch Germanus was labelled a "wood-worshiper." Known as the Iconoclastic Council of Hieria of 754 AD, it banned not only the veneration of icons, but also representation of any likeness. Even the possession of icons was now illegal. The churches were "cleaned up," so to speak, with all the icons removed. Images of likeness previously displayed in public places were now painted over with scenes of hunting and horse races.

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[131] For the historical overview of the Byzantine Iconoclasm see: Warren Tredgold, *A History of the Byzantine State and Society* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975); Anton Vladimirovich Kartashev, *Vselenskie Sobory* [Ecumenical Councils] (M.: Respublika, 1994); Theophanes the Confessor, *The Chronicle of Theophanes: an English Translation of Anni Mundi 6095-6305 (A.D. 602-813)* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982); A. A. Vasiliev, "The Iconoclastic Edict of the Caliph Yazid II, A.D. 721," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* Vol. 9 (1956): 23-47.

Iconoclasts even blamed icons for various environmental disasters,[132] and military defeats,[133] these things were sure signs of God's disapproval. Although Leo III had been successful in repulsing some Arab attacks, for example, he could not stop or prevent all Arab invasions. So he attributed his military troubles, as well as the violent eruption of Thera in 718, to God's condemnation of the worship of icons and on this basis ordered their removal. Icons were further associated with Byzantine troubles and unrest, during the reign of Leo's son Constantine V. The outbreak of a plague, though, causing the loss of many lives, was ascribed rather to God's distaste for iconoclastic politics. It might be that this particular interpretation restrained Constantine from decisive action against iconophiles for close to a decade (744-753).

The fact that all society was involved in the Byzantine iconoclastic unrest also illustrates the importance of the events evolving around icons and their interpretation. The emperors, the church hierarchy, monks, the army, and even ordinary lay people participated in the iconoclastic dispute. Leo III the Isaurian (who ruled from 717 until 741), Constantine V Copronymus (741 to 775) and Leo V the Armenian (813 to 820) were not just emperors, but leaders of Byzantine Iconoclasm. Constantine V, for instance, acted not only as an emperor but also as a theologian.[134] Irene (empress from 797 to 802), acting as her son Constantine VI's regent, as well as Theodora, also acting as her son Michael III's regent, both worked to restore icon-worshipping. The army, though, traditionally fell on the iconoclastic side of the debate, while monasteries remained a stronghold of icon-worshipping. The prominent defenders of icons, John of Damascus, Theodore the Studite and Nikephoros were all monks. The monastic institute won the hostility and disapproval of Constantine V, and monks were often the cruel victims of Iconoclasm during the reign of Constantine. The monks, in turn, who were traditionally the spiritual leaders of ordinary people, passed their position down to these ordinary people. The impact and complexity of the dispute is only too obvious. Thus, visual images should be studied as the central issue in this dispute, not merely as a by-product concealing the "real motivating forces" of the Byzantine iconoclasts.

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[132] Theophanes the Confessor, *The Chronicle of Theophanes: an English Translation of Anni Mundi 6095-6305 (A.D. 602-813).*
[133] Tredgold, *A History of the Byzantine State and Society*, 350.
[134] Schönborn, *God's Human Face: The Christ Icon*, 58.

The duration of the conflict also highlights the importance of the Byzantine iconoclastic disputes. In 726 (or 730)[135] iconoclasm became the official policy of the Byzantine Empire. The first iconoclastic period was ended by the Second Council of Nicaea in 787. It was followed by a brief icon-restoration under the empress Irene. Iconoclasm was not actively brought back until the reign of Leo V the Armenian, who was crowned in 813. The second period of iconoclasm began similarly as the first period did, with the removal of the icon of Christ from the Bronze Gate, by Leo's soldiers. The parallels between the first and the second period are remarkable. Both were started by an eastern emperor, named Leo, who crowned his son Constantine, and both were ended by a widow empress, acting as regent on behalf for a young son. In 843, Theodora organized a celebration of Orthodoxy, still celebrated by the Orthodox Church on the first Sunday of great Lent. This marked the end of the second period of Iconoclasm. In total, the Byzantine debates concerning the nature of visual images took up more than hundred years.

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[135] Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 149.

Byzantine Iconoclasm: alternative explanations

I see Byzantine Iconoclasm as a conflict between two irreconcilable concepts of the image of a person. The iconoclasts promoted the immaterial image of a person as the only true image and this led them to reject icons as spurious images. I base my observation on the writings of the prominent icon apologists of the Byzantine iconoclastic era—John of Damascus, Theodore the Studite and patriarch Nikephoros—as well as the materials of the Iconoclastic Council of Hieria. These texts show that the concept of "image" was the main issue of the Byzantine unrest of the eighth and early ninth century. However, the image only became the primary focus of art historians on Byzantine Iconoclasm during the middle of the twentieth.[136]

Scholars looked instead for the political explanation or the issue's real "underlying forces." Sociologists argued that Byzantine Iconoclasm was, in fact, primarily a conflict of state and church interests. Peter the Great, a Russian tsar of the late seventeenth century, once remarked scornfully that while more than three hundred monasteries flourished on the Bosphorus channel from the Black Sea to Constantinople alone, the Byzantine military could hardly find six thousand soldiers to defend the empire from the Turks.[137] The infamous Russian tsar himself did not hesitate to interfere in church affairs, in a manner not unlike that of the Byzantine iconoclastic emperors.

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[136] George Florovsky, "Origen, Eusebius and the Iconoclastic Controversy," *Church History* 19 (1950) (2, Jun): 77-96; Gerhart B. Ladner, "The Concept of the Image in the Greek Fathers and the Byzantine Iconoclastic Controversy," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 7 (1953): 1-34; Milton V. Anastos, "The Ethical Theory of Images Formulated by the Iconoclasts in 754 and 815," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 8 (1954): 151-160; Paul J. Alexander, "The Iconoclastic Council of St. Sophia (815) and Its Definitions (Horos)," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 7 (1953): 35-66.

The idea that the reforms of Leo III were directed against the expansion of monasteries rather than icons per se became popular among the Russian byzantologists of the late-nineteenth—early-twentieth centuries. This was also, understandably, the crucial period in which Marx and his theories were becoming more important, more urgent in Russia history. Thus, Uspenskii, for example, believed that icons were means of enforcing feudalization. Icons attracted people and served as a tool of power and profit. The iconoclastic program of the emperors sought to disarm monasteries of their main advantage, wonder-making icons. The monks may have coated this conflict in theological terms—as an emperor's heresy—but one should always, according to this popular approach, be aware of the conflict's true reason lying behind this theological décor.[138] Martin though questioned a similar explanation two decades later. Responding to Schwartzlose's assertion that the Byzantine iconoclastic debate was instead a conflict between the interests of the army and those of the monasteries, he notes that the monasteries were attacked only thirty-five years after the beginning of the iconoclastic movement.[139]

Now, when the significance of religious and cultural aspects is much better understood than at the beginning of the twentieth century, strictly political explanations for Byzantine Iconoclasm are rarely insisted upon. Still, historical events like Byzantine Iconoclasm are sometimes primarily viewed as evolutionary turns in the dynamics of socio-political life. Brown, for instance, offers a moderate socio-political explanation, acknowledging cultural and religious aspects only a certain importance. A similar explanation is found in the works of other researchers as well.[140] In Byzantium, power was linked with holiness, and symbols of holiness had great influence over the people. Brown, therefore, sees Byzantine Iconoclasm as "a debate on the position of the holy in Byzantine society."[141] He identifies two specific sources of holiness: consecration coming from above (the church hierarchy) and consecration coming from below (the monks). Iconoclasts, Brown argues, accepted only symbols consecrated by the clergy—the Eucharist, church buildings and the sign of the cross—and rejected icons as idolatry, as objects illegitimately consecrated from below by the monks.

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[137] Anton Vladimirovich Kartashev, *Vselenskie sobory* [Ecumenical Councils] (M.: Respublika, 1994).
[138] Uspenskii, *Ocherki po istorii Vizantii.*
[139] Martin, Edward J, *A History of the Iconoclastic Controversy* (New York, Toronto: Macmillan CO, 1978 (1930)), 28.

From the fourth to fifth century, icons gained enormous value. Brown links this with the significant role of holy men as intercessors of God. Both—icons and holy men—became important symbols in the political life of the Byzantine Empire. The threat of warfare required common symbols of loyalty and protection. The civic saints served as such and the icons of these saints linked the community with these patriotic symbols.[142]

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[140] Robin Gormack, *Writing in Gold: Byzantine Society and its Icons* (London: George Phillip, 1985), 139; Jeffery C. Anderson, "The Byzantine Panel Portrait before and after Iconoclasm," in *The Sacred Images: East and West*, ed. Robert Ousterhout and Leslie Brubaker (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 33, 39.
[141] Peter Brown, "A Dark-Age Crisis: Aspects of the Iconoclastic Controversy," *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 88, No. 346 (Jan., 1973), 1-34, 5.
[142] Ibid, 17-18.

This situation changed in the seventh century. The new political dynamic required and promoted other holy symbols. Arab raids, for instance, brought about a deep demoralization.[143] Byzantines struggled to understand the cause of God's wrath, deciding ultimately on the sin of idolatry—icons were chosen as a scapegoat. By the eighth century, the perception of icons as a loci of holiness and civic patriotism had faded. Brown concludes that, by the beginning of iconoclastic period, icons had come to symbolize an outdated political life.[144] Political imagery representing a modern patriotism was now borrowed, ironically, from the Old Testament. Byzantines considered themselves the people of God, who in his second commandment had clearly prohibited idolatry. Thus, the iconoclasts replaced icons with the cross, a more ancient symbol associated with the victories of four centuries of history.

Despite the attention he pays to cultural and religious aspects, Brown's explanation still tends to be overly political. His argument neglects the specific iconoclastic debates, which revolved around idolatry, not only as the cause of military failure, but as part of the larger issues of incarnation as a justification for visual representations, as well as the relationship between a representation and what is represented. In general, his explanation of the outbreak of iconoclasm as a shift in socio-political life ignores the concepts of images formulated by both sides of this historic controversy. Henry questions Brown's analysis, citing iconophile texts. He insists that "there was, in addition, a specifically and autonomously theological principle at stake."[145]

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[143] Ibid., 23.
[144] Ibid, 31.

Brown, however, does make an interesting observation which seems to confirm my hypothesis that iconoclasm was not a rejection of all visual images. He argues that the only two people at the time deeply interested in art were both iconoclasts: Emperor Theophilus and Bishop Theodulf of Orleans.[146] This observation stresses that iconoclasm was not a primordial anti-visual impulse, but a negative reaction to specific images—the visual representation of Christ, Theotocos, and the saints.

Gero sees the crucial impulses of iconoclasm not in socio-political conflicts, but rather in "the emperor's personal commitment."[147] He has reconstructed the emperor's biography from oriental sources, finding that his original name was "Conon." This and the emperor's place of birth, Germanica (Maras), seem to suggest that Leo was of Syrian rather than Barbarian descent. The emperor's policies, then, may also have been Syrian in origin: Monophysitism, for example, was a widely held theology in Germanicia. Nestorius, the founder of a well known heresy of the fifth century, had also been born in Germanicia. Gero also notes that Leo spent significant amount of time in the Muslim-ruled Maras. Based on this evidence, he concludes that Leo was predisposed to iconoclasm. He therefore sees Byzantine Iconoclasm as the personal reaction of the emperor against a cult of images, fortified in the sixth and seventh centuries.[148]

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[145] Patrick Henry, "What Was the Iconoclastic Controversy about?" *Church History*, Vol. 45, 1 (Mar. 1976), 16-31, 22.
[146] Ibid, 9.
[147] Stethen Gero, *Byzantine Iconoclasm During the Reign of Leo III: with Particular Attention to the Oriental Sources* (Louvian: Secretariat du Corpus SCO, 1973), 131.

Gero's explanation brings to mind an old question about a person's potential role in history. Leo Tolstoy, who denied such a role in *War and Peace*, argues, in his chapters on Kutuzov and Napoleon, that wise political leaders understand and yield to the ceaseless course of history. In a similar vein, Mango observes of Leo III's role in Byzantine Iconoclasm:

> In the light of his career, Leo may be regarded as representing the views and interests of the Byzantine army in Asia Minor, i.e. of men whose life was dominated by the conflict with the Arabs.[149]

There is another gap in Gero's explanation: the iconoclastic emperor enjoyed the support of some church groups. Leo's personal iconoclastic predisposition certainly played a role in this phenomenon, but it was not the deciding role. He, after all, was not the only one who was iconoclastically inclined. Many scholars struggle with this fact, seeking to clarify the contradictions within the church itself, particularly the Christological heresies, including Monophysitism and Paulicianism.

The Christological explanation[150] of Byzantine Iconoclasm—that the Byzantine Iconoclasm was a Monophysite heresy—was proposed by participants in the iconoclastic disputes themselves. Patriarch Nikephoros considered iconoclasm to be a campaign against incarnation.[151] At the Seventh Ecumenical Council, it was stressed that the heresy of Nestorius was irreconcilable with the painting of icons.[152] Ostrogorsky elaborates on the Christological explanation of Byzantine iconoclasm.[153] The theme of Monophysitism, he explains, is not an infrequent one in the iconoclastic debates. It touches the status of manhood in Christ and, as a consequence, the legitimacy of Christ's visual representation. The monophysites downgraded Christ's manhood, the notion of his material existence, and thus turned with disdain from visual representations. The proponents of the Christological have made an important contribution to the study of Byzantine Iconoclasm, revealing the link between the role of the bodily (the material) and the legitimacy of visual representation.

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[148] Ibid., 130.

[149] Cyril Mango, "Historical Introduction," in *Iconoclasm: Papers Given at the Ninth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies. March 1975*, Antony Bryer and Judith Herrin (Birmingham: John Goodman & Sons (Printers) Ltd, 2, 1977).

[150] The critique of this explanation is in: Sebastian Brock, "Iconoclasm and the Monophysites," in *Iconoclasm: Papers Given at the Ninth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies. March 1975*, Antony Bryer and Judith Herrin (Birmingham: John Goodman & Sons (Printers) Ltd., 1975).

Some scholars attribute the official Byzantine Iconoclasm to Islamic influence. Indeed, the two iconoclastic edicts came out within a short period of time: the edict of the caliph Yazid II in 721; and the edict of the Byzantine emperor Leo III in 726. It is believed that Islam shared a negative attitude toward representations of the human figure,[154] which was presumably influenced either by Judaism[155] or by native Syrian and Coptic Christians, who never indulged in pictorial representations of human beings.[156] The Islamic attitude is, in fact, very old, dating back to the hadiths (the traditions relating the life and deeds of the prophet Muhhamad).[157]

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[151] Nikifor, *Tvorenija svjatogo ottsa nashego Nikifora, arhiepiskopa konstantinopol'skogo*, 144.
[152] Sahas, *Icon and Logos*, 88.
[153] Georgije Ostrogorsky, *Studien zur Geschichte des byzantinischen Bilderstreites* (Breslau: Marcus, 1929).
[154] A.C. Creswell, "The Lawfulness of Painting in Early Islam," *Ars Islamica* XI-XII (1946).
[155] Ibid., 165; A. A. Vasiliev, "The Iconoclastic Edict of the Caliph Yazid II, A.D. 721," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, Vol. 9 (1956): 23-47, 25.

The chronicles describe how Yazid II may have sparked the official Byzantine iconoclasm:

> In this year a Jewish wizard who made his headquarters at Phoenician Laodikeia came to Yazid. He told him that he would rule the Arab state for forty years if he would condemn the honored and revered icons in the Christians' churches throughout his entire empire. The senseless Yazid believed him and promulgated an all-embracing edict against the holy icons. … But the Emperor Leo caused us many evils, because he shared this malignant, illegal, and evil doctrine. He found a partisan for his stupidity: a man named Beser, who had been freed from his servitude to them not long before, and had reached the Roman Emperor.[158]

Similar stories are found in many Greek texts, including the writings of Georgius Monachus and the *Life of the Constantinopolitan Martyrs*. The oldest Greek sources are the reports of the Second Council of Nicaea in 787, in which the story of Yazid is repeated and the bishop of Messana testified that he "was a boy in Syria when the Caliph of the Saracens was destroying the icons."[159] Reports of the destruction of icons under the rule of Yazid II and his influence on Leo III are also confirmed by: Latin sources (which reproduce the Greek documents); Syriac texts (including the writings of Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle of Pseudo-Dionisius*, and the writings of the Syrian Jacobite Catolicos and Gregory Abul-Faraj); Arab Moslem sources by Egyption writers (historians Muhhamad ibn-Yusuf al-Kandi, Taqi-al-Din Ahmad al-Maqrizi and Abu-l-Mahasin ibn-Tagribardi); and Armenian sources (*A History of the Wars and Conquest of the Arabs in Armenia* by Vardapet Ghevod).[160]

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[156] Edward J. Martin, *A History of the Iconoclastic Controversy* (New York, Toronto: Macmillan CO, 23, 1978 (1930)).

[157] Creswell, "The Lawfulness of Painting in Early Islam," 161.

[158] Theophanes the Confessor, *The Chronicle of Theophanes: an English Translation of Anni Mundi 6095-6305 (A.D. 602-813)*, 93-94.

[159] Vasiliev, "The Iconoclastic Edict of the Caliph Yazid II, A.D. 721," 28-30.

The iconoclastic edict of Yazid II is "a firmly established historical fact."[161] There is also no doubt about the proximity in time between the two iconoclastic edicts of Leo III and Yazid II. But the motivation of the Byzantine emperor is less certain. Was Leo indeed inspired by the iconoclastic policy of the caliph, as Greek sources claim? Some contemporary scholars doubt this. Grunebaum emphasizes that the iconoclastic controversy had its antecedents in the church and was not then imported from Arabs. Grunebaum cites a letter that explains the iconcophile position of the church, written by patriarch Germanos to two iconoclastically predisposed bishops. The letter confirms that a movement towards iconoclasm already existed within the church itself. Grunebaum concludes that official Iconoclasm was, indeed, the climax of a continuing conflict between pro-iconic and anti-iconic tendencies grounded in the understanding of the Divinity, and not the result of an Islamic influence. The Monophysites were an anti-iconic group whose belief in only one nature of Christ—the divine nature—led them to the reject human representations of the Lord.

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[160] Ibid.
[161] Ibid., 45.

Grunebaum also notes that Christians and Muslims in the eastern parts of the Byzantine Empire resisted similar dualistic heresies, which interpreted the universe as a battleground of evil (material) and good (spiritual). So this hostile attitude towards material human representations was by no means new to Byzantine, or, at least, to Asia Minor, and did not require an external (Arabic) influence, "introduced from outside into a system to which [the] problem and/or solution [was] not germane."[162]

Grabar even disputes "any real parallelism" between Muslim *i*conoclasm and Byzantine *I*conoclasm.[163] The former, he argues, never reached the level of intellectual investment or violence provoked to justify the classification of a historical event. Muslims were merely indifferent to images, while the Koran is tolerant of images as long as they do not become idols. Islamic thought never touched the central question of the Byzantine iconoclastic debates—the relationship between the representation and the represented. Grabar agrees that "calligraphy and geometric or vegetable ornament predominated in the visual tradition created by Islamic culture,"[164] but adds that this did not exclude the representation of human beings in early Islamic culture. Grabar also reasons that "in scale and in formal character, Islamic representations are, with a few exceptions, of a different order than figures in classical, Byzantine or western medieval art after the early Romanesque period."[165]

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[162] G. E. Grunebaum, "Byzantine Iconoclasm and the Influence of the Islamic Enviroment," *History of Religions* Vol. 2, 1 (Summer 1962): 1-10, 10.

[163] Oleg Grabar, "Islam and Iconoclasm," in *Iconoclasm: Papers Given at the Ninth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies. March 1975,* eds. Antony Bryer and Judith Herrin (Birmingham: John Goodman & Sons (Printers) Ltd., 1977), 45; Oleg Grabar, *Early Islamic Art, 650-1100* (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2005), 43.

[164] Grabar, "Islam and Iconoclasm," 48.

Explaining the absence of images of living beings in Islam, Grabar cites two examples from Muslim texts. In one, competing painters manage to represent a person by a combination of colors with "illusionist perfection."[166] The other, from Ghazali's *Alchemy of Happiness* states: "there is a great difference between him who loves the painted pictures on the wall on account of the beauty of its outer form and him who loves a prophet on account of a beauty of his inner form."[167] Grabar concludes that the Islamic attitude is not iconoclastic but *aniconic*; Arabs "saw images not evil *per se* (only man can do evil with them) but as irrelevant since unable to capture reality, and at worst temptations away from the requirements of a good life."[168] Grabar argues that in Islamic art the visual phenomena were interrelated with scientific and philosophical interests.[169] It was based on the belief that everything has its meaning. From this perspective, symbolic art is more effective than representations of human beings.[170] Thus Grabar concludes that Byzantine Iconoclasm had nothing to do with the Islamic attitude.[171]

Scholars who, like King and Grunebaum, deny any parallel between Islamic iconoclasm and Byzantine Iconoclasm, usually search for the explanation of the latter in church heresies, specifically in Monophysitism. This seems contradictory: one can justify a connection of Iconoclasm to Christological heresies only because the legitimacy of certain visual representations is deeply connected to the Christological doctrine. But King rejects this exact connection while discussing the Islamic attitude toward icons. There is a link between the Christian Monophysite heresies and the Islamic attitude: they both oppose the Christological doctrine, and, therefore, the denial of any parallel between the Islamic attitude toward visual images and the Byzantine iconoclastic attitude seems misguided.

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[165] Ibid.
[166] Ibid., 50.
[167] Ibid.," 51.
[168] Ibid.
[169] Grabar, *Early Islamic Art, 650-1100*, 53.
[170] For the ornament in the Islamic art see Oleg Grabar, *The Mediation of Ornament* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).
[171] A similar explanation is in G. R. D. King, "Islam, Iconoclasm, and the Declaration of Doctrine," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Stdies, University of London*, Vol. 48, 2 (1985): 267-277.

Grabar's separation of Islamic "aniconism" from Byzantine Iconoclasm also seems unfounded. Grabar explains that aniconism involves writing, ornament, abstract patterns, symbolic visual and other meaningful forms.[172] However, Byzantine iconoclasts, too, were willing to accept symbols. The Eucharist; the symbol of the cross; the writings of saints; as well as secular images like hunting or horse races were all acceptable to the Byzantine iconoclasts. [173] Byzantine Iconoclasm did not promote the complete "absence of symbols or a negative rejection to representations," and, therefore, it cannot be separated from Islamic "aniconism" on that basis.

The immaterial images of a person such as symbols, virtues, deeds and words show that Byzantine iconoclasts actually shared some of this Islamic "aniconism" in their own preference of symbols and abstract patterns and insistence on the "ultimate impossibility of representations of living things."[174] Grabar himself admits that Ghazali's opposition between inner and outer beauty reminds him of Plotinus, a neo-Platonic thinker. The same opposition runs throughout the arguments of the Byzantine iconoclasts.

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[172] Grabar, *Early Islamic Art, 650-1100*, 48.
[173] Ernst Kitzinger, "The Cult of Images in the Age before Iconoclasm," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, vol. 8 (1954): 83-150, 89.

Islamic and Byzantine iconoclastic attitudes also share similar arguments concerning exactly which representations of living beings result in idolatry. Grabar mentions that the Koran distinguishes between images that lead to idolatry and those that do not, and is not overly concerned with the second group.[175] That distinction was also a central issue for both the Byzantine iconoclasts and iconophiles.

What Grabar states about the aniconistic can also be said of the iconoclastic attitude (particularly, of the Byzantine iconoclastic attitude). Aniconism cannot be separated from the iconoclastic attitude on the basis that one line of thought rejects images in general, while the other rejects representations of likeness due to their inability to grasp the inner beauty of a person. An unfounded rejection of all images is not iconoclasm, but Barbarism. The Byzantine case or, more precisely, the arguments of both the iconoclasts and iconophiles, show that the iconoclastic debates also raised the question of the adequacy of visual representations of humans. The iconoclasts believed that a person's portrait causes idolatry. The issues of idolatry that surfaced during the iconoclastic debates also confirm that iconoclastic attitudes, again, did not reject all images, but distinguished between spurious visual images (those that substitute the represented one and lead to idolatry) and true images (those that grasp some inner essence).

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[174] Grabar, "Islam and Iconoclasm," 51; Grabar, "*Early Islamic Art, 650-1100,*" 54.
[175] Ibid., 45.

Chapter 3. Comparative Approach

Some researchers believe that the literal meaning of the word "iconoclast" is incorrectly applied to the Byzantine iconoclastic movement. They argue that Byzantine iconoclasts allowed certain visual images, including birds, herbs, ornaments and other symbolic representations. As I mentioned in the preceding chapter, Grabar names this approach "aniconism" rather than iconoclasm.[176] This discrepancy in definition demands a clarification of the term "iconoclasm," which is not merely an anti-visual impulse: not just any image was a point of contention. Specifically, the Byzantine unrest of the eighth century revolved around a particular type of image—the visual representation of the human form. As I explained earlier, the iconoclastic emperors banned portraits of Christ, the Virgin Mary and the Saints. I have also presented Iconoclasm as a conflict between the two irreconcilable concepts of the image of a person: visual images like icons, and the more abstract notion of deeds and virtues as images. This form of iconoclasm sees only the visual representation of people as deceitful, and it is in this respect that the Byzantine reactionaries can be labeled iconoclasts.

In the preceding chapter, I also argued that icons promote a particular view of a person, namely the comparative (or visual). The Byzantine iconoclasts rejected this approach. They believed that icons misinterpret the complex nature of a person, suggesting instead the alternative images—a person's deeds and virtues as examples to follow—a kind of un-visual image. According to Byzantine iconoclastic thought, only these last images manage to grasp the essence of a person, without replacing that person with some kind of simulacrum. These ideas on the competing relationships between images and the proto-images are not unique, however, to the Byzantine iconoclasts. Such views can also be found in Platonic thought, including Plato's original concept of simulacrum. Similar arguments are also echoed in Marx's theory of alienation and generally characterize the essentialist approach. In my final chapter, I will show that the very concept of identity is also based on the essentialist approach.

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[176] Oleg Grabar , *Early Islamic Art, 650—1100* (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2005), 48.

In this chapter, though, I will address the comparative approach, elaborated by the iconophiles during the two periods of Byzantine Iconoclasm. I will explore how the iconophiles' dialectics of the visual image—image and proto-image are identical and different at the same time—ruled out the iconoclastic accusation of idolatry, the nature of which was the subject of disagreement between the two movements. I will also explore the concept of visual realism advanced by the iconophiles. The iconophiles understood realism not as a visual illusion of reality, but as the confirmation of the historical existence of a particular person. If people can be seen, they can be depicted, and this visual representation in turn testifies to their existence. Icons represented the *hypostasis* of a person, precisely the person him- or herself, but not his or her appearance, or any other separate component. Icons identified a person, and the visual played the key role in that identification—this is the iconophile understanding of visual realism.

Between fantasies and idols: two concepts of idolatry

Both iconoclasts and iconophiles considered pagans to be idolaters. Their critique of the pagans, in fact, might have been a potential meeting point between the two movements, but again they both viewed idolatry differently; pagan practices bothered them in different ways. The iconoclasts understood idolatry as the substitution of the living God with a dead material representation. They blamed iconophiles for worshiping icons instead of God just as the pagans confused statues with gods. To the iconophiles, pagan idolatry was wrong not because it involved material representations, but because it praised non-existing gods, something conceived by an unrestrained imagination. Challenged by accusations of idolatry, of replacing God with material representations, iconophiles developed a unique dialectics of image (an icon or a portrait) and proto-image (the one who is depicted): an image is identical with its proto-image in likeness and name, and at the same time it is different from its proto-image in essence. That distinction precluded the possibility of replacement and therefore idolatry.

From the responses of the iconophiles themselves,[177] we can see that iconoclasts charged them with the *pagan* practice of worshipping worthless material (the wood and paint of which the icon is made) in place of God. But even the pagans emphasized that their statues were not gods themselves, but rather their representations. Plutarch, for instance, warned of overly identifying the gods with their statues:

> Therefore when we look at the images of the gods, let us not indeed think that they are stones or woods, but neither let us think that they are gods themselves; and indeed we do not say that the statues of the emperors are

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[177] John of Damascus, Saint, *Three Treatise on the Divine Images,* trans. Louth, Andrew (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminar Press, 2003), 69-17.

> mere woods and stone and bronze, but still less do we say that they are the emperors themselves. He who loves the emperor delights to see the emperor's statue, and he who loves his son delights to see his son's statue, and he who loves his father delights to see his father's statue. It follows that he who loves the gods delights to gaze on the images of the gods and their likeness and he feels reverence and shudders with awe of the gods who look at him from the unseen world… If anyone makes an image of his friend, he does not think the friend is actually in the statue, not that the members of his body are enclosed in those of the portrait. But it is the honor paid to his friend which appears in the image… Statues of the gods were invented in order to remind men of God, that the thoughts of those visiting the temples might be led to God… Our fathers established images and altars … as symbols of the presence of the gods, not that we may regard such things, but that we may worship the gods through them.[178]

Thus, Baynes argues, "the apology of the pagans for the statues is designed to show … that there is no idolatry: these are not gods…"[179]

For the iconophiles, pagan idolatry was not a replacement of gods by their material statues. The iconophiles were most likely familiar with the pagans' own apologies for statues as *representations*, and so the replacement of gods with statues was not likely the focus of the iconophiles' critique. A bishop of Thessalonica, for example, once described a dialogue between a Saint and a pagan:

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[178] Norman Baynes , "Idolatry and Early Church," in Baynes, Norman, *Byzantine Studies and Other Essays* (London: University of London, Athlone Press, 1955), 130-131.
[179] Ibid., 133.

> The pagan said, "Do you not in the churches paint images of your Saints and worship them, and not only of Saints, but also of your God? In the same manner you may consider that when we cherish our idols, we do not worship these, but the incorporeal forces to whom we do service through them."[180]

This excerpt shows that the iconophiles identified pagans as idolaters not because of their fondness for *material* representations, but because they were fond of the *wrong* representations. In other words, the iconophiles' concept of idolatry stressed not the material of the representation, but the subject of the representation: "Who is represented?"; "Did he or she really exist?":

> We, however, make images of men who have existed and had bodies—the servants of God—so that we may remember them and reverence them, and we do nothing incongruous in depicting them such as they have been. We do not invent anything as you do, nor do we exhibit the physical portraits of certain incorporeal beings.[181]

In this way, iconophiles identified idols as the representation of non-existing gods. An icon apologist, patriarch Nikephoros, characterized the idol as something non-existent and having neither form nor appearance.[182] It is clear from this position why the iconophiles felt that the Incarnation—God's existence as a man—precluded the risk of idolatry.[183] Icons, unlike the idol's depiction of something non-existent, never depict a phantasm of the imagination. An icon is a visual representation of a historical person, and therefore should never be confused with an idol. The iconophiles stated such at the Seventh Ecumenical Council: "… all of us confess that Christ our true God, by his advent in flesh, separated us from the error of idols and from every pagan religion."[184]

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[180] Cyril Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire: 312—1453*(Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1972).
[181] Ibid.
[182] Nikifor, *Tvorenija svjatogo ottsa nashego Nikifora,* 455.

Yet another definition of idolatry was accepted among the apologists of icons, namely, worship of demons:

> May you then not receive the mercy of Christ our Saviour who rejoices in the material representations of the Saints, but detest violently the abominable <idols> of Satan and his evil defenders, who, seeing Christ and likewise His servants depicted in icons, get upset, groan, lament bitterly, gnash their teeth and raise a dust of calamities against those who like doing these things.[185]

> Greeks dedicated images to demons and called them gods, while we [dedicate images] to the true God incarnate and the servants and friends of God and drive away the hosts of the demons.[186]

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[183] J. A. Munitz, and others, eds, *The Letter of the Three Patriarchs and Realted Texts* (Camberley: Porphyrogenitus, 1997), 52; Nikifor, *Tvorenija svjatogo ottsa nashego Nikifora*, 455; Daniel J. Sahas, *Icon and Logos: Sources in Eight-Century Iconoclasm* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), 66, 67, 112.

[184] Sahas, *Icon and Logos*.

[185] Ignatios the Deacon, Saint, *The Life of the Patriarch Tarasios*, trans. Stephanos Efthymiadis (Aldershot U.K.; Brookfield, USA: Ashgate, 1998).

[186] John of Damascus, Saint. *Three Treatise on the Divine Images*, trans. Louth, Andrew (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminar Press, 2003).

> For idols are likenesses of falsely-called [gods], of adulterers and murderers, of child-sacrificers and catamites, and not of prophets or apostles. … So for the rest it is to be understood concerning icons and idols, pagan and Christian, that those were fashioned for the glory of the devil and in his memory, while these are for the glory of Christ and his apostles and martyrs and Saints[187]

Iconophiles clearly defined idolatry at the Seventh Ecumenical Council: "For *what is an idol,* asks the Apostle, or *what is the food offered to idols, but that which the Gentiles sacrifice to demons and not to God.*"[188]

Both definitions of idols given by iconophiles—the representation of something non-existent and the representation of demons—focus on one who is represented, not the material of representation or the fact of representation's existence. It is the subject here that is important. Whether something really exists or is simply the product of the artist's imagination is what distinguishes an icon from an idol.[189]

Dialectics of sameness and difference

The materiality of representation was the objection of the iconoclasts. They believed that it was first necessary do something with the material before it became worthy of representing God. However, they argued, there is no prayer powerful enough to raise material from its worthless status, thus it can never truly be worthy of God's representation.[190] In response to this critique, the iconophiles insisted that the close links between an image and its proto-image make the image worthy of respect. Again at the Seventh Ecumenical Council, they stated:

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[187] Ibid., 134.

[188] Sahas, *Icon and Logos*, 103.

[189] For the difference between icon and idol see also: Irven M. Reznick, "Idols and Images: Early Definitions and Controvercies," *Sobornost* 7(2) (1985):35—41; Antony Eastmond, "Icon and Idol: the Uncertainty of Imperial Images," in *Icon and Word: the Power of Images in Byzantium*, eds. Antony Eastmond and Liz James (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 73-86; Kenneth Parry, *Depicting the Word: Byzantine Iconophile Thought of the Eighth and Ninth Century* (Leiden; New York: E.J. Brill, 1996), 28; Leslie Brubaker, *Vision and Meaning in Ninth Century Byzantium* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 20—21.

> …many of the sacred things which we have at our disposal do not need a prayer of sanctification, since their name itself says that they are all-sacred and full of grace.[191]

Next, the iconophiles shifted the focus of the debates from the possibility of material representation to the subject of representation, developing the dialectics of image (icon) and proto-image (the one who is represented). The detailed expression of this dialectics appears in the writings of Theodore the Studite in his epistles and his three refutations of iconoclasts known as *Antirrheticus*. He finds the accusation that the production of icons amounted to the worship of wooden idols absurd.[192] In response to this he asks a rhetorical question: When honoring a person, whom do you honor—the person or his name?[193] It makes little sense to separate such things as image and proto-image or a thing and its name—they imply each other. The iconophiles explained that if one called someone by name, one surely called the person him- or herself:

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[190] Sahas, *Icon and Logos,* 97.
[191] Ibid.
[192] Feodor Studit, "Pervoe oproverzhenie ikonobortsev" [The first refutation of iconoclasts], *Simvol* 18 (1987):253-268.
[193] Ibid.

> …the imperial image, too, is called the emperor, and yet there are not two emperors: neither is the power cut asunder nor is the glory divided.[194]

Iconophiles argued that they by no means "multiplied gods," but rather implied that the icon of Christ, while different from Christ in essence, is identical with Christ in name. This dialectic excluded the substitution of a person by his or her visual representation, making idolatry impossible. Theodore the Studite, therefore labeled all those who refused to apply the name of Christ to the representation of his appearance heretics.[195] This concept of sharing a name, but not an essence was not, though, something invented by the iconophiles. Theodore the Studite himself referred to Greek philosophy, recalling the notion of homonym, which describes things that share the same name, but possess different essences.[196] Parry too has noted the homonym, explaining that its origins lie in Aristotelian terminology.[197]

The iconophiles specified another link between an image and its proto-image, namely, that the image is identical to its proto-image in likeness. This likeness then identifies a person. This may not seem particularly revolutionary, but even the iconoclasts acknowledged the distinction, admitting that the portrait of an emperor demands respect because it represents the likeness of an authoritative person:

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[194] Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 47.

[195] Feodor Studit, "Pervoe oproverzhenie ikonobortsev," 267.

[196] Feodor Studit, *Poslaniya: kniga 2* [Epistles: Book 2] (M., 2003), 145.

[197] Kenneth Parry, *Depicting the Word: Byzantine Iconophile Thought of the Eighth and Ninth Century* (Leiden; New York: E.J. Brill, 1996), 55.

> …the image of an absent Emperor fulfils the place of the Emperor, and rulers venerate it, not looking at the wooden plank, but at the figure of the Emperor, who is not seen to be present by nature, but is depicted by art.[198]

In this case, "the honor shown to the image is transmitted to its model."[199] This last quote from Basyl the Great became the epitome of the iconophile defense during the two periods of Byzantine Iconoclasm. In other words, the image and the proto-image are identical in likeness, therefore, when honoring an image, its proto-image is honored as well; and no replacement, no idolatry can possibly occur.

To clarify this idea of shared likeness, Theodore the Studite cites the example of a signet ring:

> Or take the example of a signet ring engraved with the imperial image, and let it be impressed upon wax, pitch and clay. The impression is one and the same in the several materials which, however, are different with respect to each other; yet it would not have remained identical unless it were entirely unconnected with the materials… The same applies to the likeness of Christ irrespective of the material upon which it is represented.[200]

Regardless of the material, each impression is identified with the original, because it holds the likeness of the original. It is thanks to likeness that one does not confuse one person with another. Looking at the image of a person, one sees simply the person him- or herself.[201] The image becomes identical to its proto-image and receives the same honor as its proto-image as soon as the shared features are recognized. Nor should there be any uncertainty about the moment when the image becomes identical with its proto-image. A bishop of the late fourth and early fifth century, John Chrysostom explained:

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[198] John of Damascus, Saint, *Three Treatise on the Divine Images*, trans. Louth, Andrew (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminar Press, 2003), 150.
[199] Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empir,* 47.
[200] Ibid., 174.

> For they put forth their boards and trace white lines all round, and sketch the images of emperors. And before applying the true colors, they erase certain things with complete freedom, and draw others in their place, thus correcting their mistakes and transposing what had been done faultily. But after having applied the paints, they are no longer able to erase or redraw anything, because that would damage the beauty of the image and such action would be blameworthy.[202]

Likeness abolishes accusations of idolatry, which is typically understood as replacing the proto-image. The proto-image, however, cannot be replaced by what is identical to it. The iconophiles, for instance, did not share the widespread belief that Byzantine icons were actually windows to heaven, a Platonic explanation.[203] An image of a person cannot be a window to that person but rather the person him- or herself. Like a name—which the image and its subject share—the image identifies the person, and is one and the same with that person.

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[201] Feodor Studit, "Tretie oproverzhenie ikonobortsev" [The third refutation of iconoclasts], *Simvol* 18 (1987):295—331, 323.
[202] Ibid., 47.
[203] Ibid., xiv.

Arguing that respect was owed to icons, rejecting accusations of idolatry, the iconophiles referred to the practice of honoring imperial images. This practice was beyond any suspicion. The portraits of emperors could be seen anywhere.[204] Patriarch Nikephoros was surprised by the inconsistency of the iconoclasts: on one hand, they complied with the practice of honoring the imperial image; on the other hand, they regarded icon-worship as idolatrous.[205] This practice of honoring imperial images implied that the portrait of an emperor is identical with the emperor himself. The relationship between the emperor and his portrait became the model which the iconophiles used to explain the relationships between icons and their proto-images.

At the Seventh Ecumenical Council, they summarized:

> …drawing upon the holy Fathers, the honor of the icon is conveyed to the prototype. When one looks at the icon of a king, he sees the king in it. Thus, he who bows to the icon bows to the king in it, for it is his form and his characteristics that are on the icon.[206]

The relationship between an image and its proto-image had already been established in the fourth century by the bishop, later Saint, Athanasius of Alexandria. His text on imperial images was quoted by John of Damascus, Theodore the Studite[207] and patriarch Nikephoros,[208] to further support the dialectic of equality and difference between an image and its proto-image:

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[204] Ibid., 24.
[205] Nikifor Arkhiepiskop Konstantinopol'skij, *Tvorenija svjatogo ottsa nashego Nikifora, arkhiepiskopa konstantinopol'skogo* [The works of our Father Nicephoros, archbishop of Constantinople] (Minks: Kharvest, 2001), 475.
[206] Sahas, *Icon and Logos*, 10.
[207] Feodor Studit, "Vtoroe oproverzhenie ikonobortsev," 294, 274, 277.

> One might understand this more closely from the example of the image of the Emperor; for the form and shape in the image of the Emperor is exact, so that one who sees the image sees the Emperor in it and again one who sees the Emperor understands that this is in the image. From the fact that the likeness is not changed, the image might say to one who, after the image, wished to see the Emperor: "I and the Emperor are one; for I am in him and he is in me, and what you have seen in me, this you see in him, and what you have seen in him, this you see in me; for the one who venerates the image venerates in it the Emperor. For his shape and form is the image."[209]

All the iconoclasts knew, of course, that disrespect shown to the imperial image could carry the death penalty.[210] This transgression was regarded as disrespect to the emperor himself.[211] Bishop Abu Qurrah, a defender of icons, was more straightforward about the fact that the image is identical with its proto-image:

> If somebody painted an icon on a panel of the king's mother engaged in sexual intercourse with that tramp, and spread the notoriety of her icon throughout the city, going around in the streets and alleys looking for an opportunity to expose her. ... Would the king not cut him limb from limb?

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[208] Nikifor, *Tvorenija svjatogo ottsa nashego Nikifora arkhiepiskopa konstantinopol'skogo*, 486-487.
[209] John of Damascus, *Three Treatise on the Divine Images*, 147.
[210] For the status of the imperial portraits in the Byzantine empire see Sergei Averintsev, *Poetika rannevizantijskoi literatury* [Poetics of early Byzantine literature] (M., 1977); Antony Eastmond, "Icon and Idol: the Uncertainty of Imperial Images," in *Icon and Word: the Power of Images in Byzantium*, eds. Antony Eastmond, and James Liz (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003).
[211] John of Damascus, *Three Treatise on the Divine Images*, trans. Andrew Louth (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminar Press, 200), 115, 119; Feodor Studit, *Poslaniya: kniga 2;* Sahas, *Icon and Logos*, 175; Nikifor Arkhiepiskop Konstantinopol'skij, *Tvorenija svjatogo ottsa nashego Nikifora*, 475, 480; Leslie Brubaker, *Vision and Meaning in Ninth Century Byzantium* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 29.

> No doubt about it! And were the perpetrator of the deed to undertake to offer an excuse to the king, saying, "I did not do anything to your mother; I only did something with a panel and some colors," the king would get angrier at him for his arrogance toward him and the greed in his mind.[212]

The iconophiles criticized the iconoclasts for the inconsistency of their argument; that they saw iconography as the worship of the lifeless material representations, even while honoring the portraits of the emperor. Were not the portraits of emperors, like icons, nothing but wood, paint and wax? Why then did the iconoclasts venerate these portraits? The iconophiles insisted that honoring a pictorial image was reasonable because the honor shown to, say, the portrait of an emperor was actually being directed to the monarch himself, not the material of his representation:

> And as he who reviles the icon of a king is justifiably subject to punishment for having actually dishonored the king—even though the icon is nothing but wood and paints mixed and blended together with wax—so does he who dishounours the figure of any of these [Saints] transfer the insult to him whose figure is [on the icon]. Even the very nature of things teaches that when an icon is dishonored, it is certainly the prototype that is dishonored.[213]

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[212] Abu Qurrah, Saint, *A Treatise on the Veneration of the Holy Icons*, trans. Sidney H. Griffith (Louvain: Peeters, 1997), 92.

[213] Sahas, *Icon and Logos: Sources in Eight-Century Iconoclasm* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), 101.

In summary, the image is identical to the proto-image in name and likeness, so the honor shown to the image is transmitted to its proto-image. The iconophiles, though, never claimed an absolute equality of image and proto-image. As I have already mentioned, they dismissed any possibility of an equality of essence. It was the iconoclasts, in fact, who insisted that the only way to avoid idolatry, to circumvent the substitution of the proto-images with their images, was to make the image absolutely identical, in every respect, including material, to its proto-image.[214] Patriarch Nikephoros regarded this approach as illogical. An image will always be different from its proto-image in essence. The absolute association of an image and its proto-image ignores the difference between them, so the very concept of image is annihilated.[215] An image shares only the likeness of its proto-image. The essence will always be different: a proto-image is alive and able to reason and move, while an image is inanimate, motionless and unable to think.[216] An image and its proto-image are therefore only the same in likeness, but different in essence. A visual image can share only the likeness of its proto-image.[217]

The dialectic of image and proto-image, shown above, is crucial for understanding the comparative approach. The clarification of another iconophile argument, realism as they understood it, will also contribute to the analysis of the visual perspective of a person.

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[214] Ibid.

[215] Nikifor Arkhiepiskop Konstantinopol'skij, *Tvorenija svjatogo ottsa nashego Nikifora,* 371.

[216] Ibid., 402.

[217] Feodor Studit, "Vtoroe oproverzhenie ikonobortsev," 269-294.

Two concepts of realism

The modern reaction to Byzantine icons ranges from dismissing them as primitive paintings by unskilled artists, to equating them with that modern art which also consciously breaks with realistic techniques. Throughout these different and sometimes opposite responses, though, one point is generally accepted—that the iconographic technique is by no means realistic.

Figure 3.1. Andrej Rublev, *Christ Enthroned in Glory*.
The Cathedral of the Dormition in Vladimir. Photo by the author.

Some consider its abstraction intentional, due, maybe, to the "general influence of oriental sensibilities, including the Neo-Platonic and Christian rejection of the material world in favour of the ideal and the spiritual."[218] Others ascribe the lack of realism simply to a lack of necessary skills. The Byzantines themselves, however, never saw their art as unrealistic.[219] Indeed, the vitae of the Byzantine Saints regard icons as being extremely realistic. The modern admirer of art is perhaps confused by this assertion. To our contemporary sensibility Byzantine icons look quite obviously abstract.

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[218] John Onians, "Abstraction and Imagination in Late Antiquity," *Art History* 3 (1) (1980): 1—24, 2.

Figure 3.2. *St. John the Baptist*. XV century. Photo by the author.
Courtesy of The Andrei Rublev Museum of Early Russian Art.

One explanation of this discrepancy, again supported by the vitae of the Saints,[220] is that the modern concept of realism in art differs from the Byzantine one. Byzantine painting was never meant to provide a replica of the subject. The icon had to *identify* a Saint and if the viewer was able to recognize a Saint in the icon, then the icon was sufficiently realistic.

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[219] Leslie Brubaker, "Perception and Conception: Art, Theory and Culture in Ninth Century Buzantium," *Word and Image* 5 (1) (1989): 19—32, 19; Gilbert Dagron, "Holy Images and Likeness," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 45 (1991): 23—33, 23; Robert Grigg, "Relativism and Pictorial Realism," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 42 (4) (1984): 397-408; Robert Grigg, Byzantine Credulity as an Impediment to Antiquarianism. *Gesta* 26 (1) (1987): 3–9, 3; Maguire, Henry, *Rhetoric, Nature and Magic in Byzantine Art* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), 7; Cyril Mango, "Antique Statuary and the Byzantine Beholder," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 17 (1963): 55—75, 14.

[220] Cyril Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire: 312—1453* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1972), 40, 138, 211-213.

Mango illustrates with an analysis of rhetorical clichés. The rhetorical formulas created in antique art were used in the descriptions of later art. However, while these rhetorical clichés were appropriate for "the relatively naturalistic art of the fourth century," they tend to contradict later non-naturalistic paintings.[221] These clichés were still used "without any distinction."[222] This, Mango believes, explains the contradiction between the "not naturalistic" icon and the Byzantine perception of icons. It is an example of the "fossilization of artistic criticism in the face of completely different phenomena."[223]

Not only Byzantine scholars, though, familiar with antique clichés, described the icons as realistic. The popular vitae of Saints also insisted that icons truthfully represented the likeness of Saints.[224] For example, St. Nilus of Sinai describes a young man who was taken into custody and prayed to St. Plato for help. The young man is answered with a vision:

> Plato suddenly appeared on horseback before the young man who was then awake, bringing along another horse without a rider. The young man recognized the Saint because he had often seen his portrait in images.[225]

In another example, the iconographer states:

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[221] Cyril Mango, "Antique Statuary and the Byzantine Beholder," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 17 (1963): 55-75, 65.
[222] Ibid.
[223] Ibid, 66.
[224] Cyril Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire: 312—1453* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1972), 40, 138, 211-213, 138.
[225] Ibid, 40.

> I depicted the portrait of my master Pancratius on an image, exactly as he was, and when I see him in the image, I think that he is alive and that I am in his company.[226]

Grigg explains the contradiction between Eastern Christian non-realistic icons and the insistence that these icons represent faithful likenesses the following way: while the Byzantines were sure that they followed the realistic art of *antiquity*, they, in fact, created their own art, a new and different artistic phenomenon.[227] They were not familiar with the realistic art of the Greeks and Romans. In the other words, the Byzantines did not measure their art against the realistic art of previous artists. As a consequence, the standards applied by the Byzantines to their art were different from the standards of the realism of antiquity.[228]

According to Grigg's perspective, the Byzantines were not being unscrupulous in their usage of outdated rhetorical clichés applied to non-realistic art. They were sincere in their claims that icons accurately represented the likeness of the Saints; this was not a rhetorical exaggeration. Maguire also concludes that the Byzantine writers, describing icons, did not use antique rhetorical formulas with their focus on realism blindly. Instead, they tried to match them to painting.[229]

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[226] Ibid.

[227] Grigg, "Relativism and Pictorial Realism;" Grigg, "Byzantine Credulity as an Impediment to Antiquarianism."

[228] Grigg, "Byzantine Credulity as an Impediment to Antiquarianism," 4.

[229] Henry Maguire, "Truth and Convention," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 28 (1974): 111—140, 113; Henry Maguire, "Originality in Byzantine Art" in *Originality in Byzantine Literature, Art and Music*, ed. A. R Littlewood (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 1995), 104.

Onians explains the contradiction in question, examining the changes in the perception of art from the Classical to Medieval age.[230] He traces both the evolution of art itself and its literary description. That evolution is marked by an aversion to unnecessary detail such as three dimensional space, volume, and reflected light. The evolution of the literary description of art, however, proceeds in the opposite direction. The texts tend to become much more descriptive. Onians concludes that the writers of these later texts, indeed viewers of art in general, were able to perceive more in a piece of art than their predecessors, so much so that painting itself ceased to require as much detail. For instance:

> While in the first century a slab of marble was little more than a piece of stone of a particular provenance and with a particular color and marking, facts about it can be listed quite objectively, by the sixth century the same rectangular slab or pair of slabs can be seen to represent a flowery meadow, the moon, a river, the sea and almost certainly the human figure. In other words the sixth-century spectator could actually *see* much more in the slab than his predecessors. He could look at something which was in twentieth-century terms purely abstract and find it representational.[231]

Onians thus explains the economy of information in the later Byzantine paintings by the development of visual imagination. The viewer's imagination was able to finish a painting, so it did not look abstract but realistic. The realistic Byzantine descriptions of icons were sincere. Brubaker supports Onians' explanation: Byzantines' perception was based not only on what they saw but also on what they imagined.[232] This way, Brubaker and Onians explain the contradiction in question by the increased imaginative activity of the viewer. The visual imagination of Byzantines was richer than that of a viewer who was in need of realistic paintings. Some Byzantine authors are quite emotional in their descriptions of icons; a modern viewer does not often find in icons what a Byzantine writer sees. Ignatios the Deacon in the VIII-IX centuries thus describes a series of painted martyrdoms:

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[230] John Onians, "Abstraction and Imagination in Late Antiquity," *Art History* 3 (1) (1980): 1-24.
[231] Ibid., 11.

> Who, beholding a man who has stripped himself to face horrible torments and various sorts of tortures and is finally beheaded, would not depart smiting his breast in contrition of heart?[233]

To a contemporary viewer a typical Byzantine martyrdom icon often looks strangely calm in its austerity. Onians suggests that the Byzantine admirers of art, perhaps, invested more activity than the artists themselves.[234] The activity demanded of a Byzantine iconographer was really quite low. However, I believe that this does not necessarily imply that an icon inevitably demanded the involvement of the viewer's individual active imagination. The texts of the Seventh Ecumenical Council which considered the central issues concerning icons did not, for instance, raise the question of the viewer's activity. As we will see, they stressed the reduced role of the artist, not the individual role of the viewer. If an icon required the activity of a spectator, it was not the activity of that person's individual visual imagination, but rather the person's participation in the collective imagination, in a shared system of tradition, for instance:

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[232] Leslie Brubaker, "Perception and Conception: Art, Theory and Culture in Ninth Century Buzantium," *Word and Image* 5 (1) (1989): 19—32, 25.
[233] Ignatios the Deacon, *The Life of Patriarch Tarasios*, 195.
[234] Onians, "Abstraction and Imagination in Late Antiquity," 13.

> The idea, therefore, and the tradition are theirs, not the painter's. Only the art is of a painter, whereas the disposition is certainly of the holy Fathers who erected [churches].[235]

The vitae of the Saints also emphasize that the single imagination of a painter should not play a role in iconography. The iconographer, they explained, painted from life, or, more precisely, from a vision:

> And likewise the following day he had exactly the same dream and, being assured of God that this was a holy vision, he proceeded to the monastery, and after relating to the abbess what he had seen, he painted the image of St. Theodora, although he had not been informed by anyone of the height of her stature or the nature of her complexion or her facial traits. Assisted by God's guidance and the Saint's prayers, he depicted her in such a form that those who had known her well asserted that she looked like that when she was young.[236]

Two other vitae tell a similar tale:

> At that time she [St. Mary] appeared in a dream to a painter who was a recluse at Rhaedestus. … "I am Mary from the city of Bizye, concerning

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[235] Sahas, *Icon and Logos*, 84.
[236] Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 211.

> whom you have heard many things, although until now you have not seen me. So as you see me now, paint my image together with my servants Orestes and Bardanes and my maid Agatha who is following me, and send this image to the city of Bizye." … When those who had known her in her lifetime saw the icon, they were filled with astonishment and acknowledged that this was indeed her appearance and that of her servants.[237]

> Having summoned a skilled painter, he described to him in detail the Saint's visage and appearance, the [color of his] hair and his costume; and he enjoined [the artist] to paint the Saint's likeness on a board. As for the painter, he returned home and set about fulfilling the order by means of his own skill, but he found the task most difficult, and his toil proved useless: for excellently trained as he was in his art, he was unable to portray with all exactitude a man he had never seen on the basis of a [verbal] account alone. … The painter disclosed the reason and explained the difficulty of his task. Whereupon he who appeared to a monk said in a calm voice: "Observe me, brother, for the man to be painted is in all respects similar to me. … the Saint had immediately vanished.

The vitae stress that iconographers were instructed by vision, so neither their will nor their imagination played any important role. Only an iconographer's skill was necessary in the creation of a likeness. Nor was there much room for a spectator's individual imagination. The individual viewer's role was simply to recognize the Saint. Among the Byzantines, there were special, commonly shared codes—cultural traditions—for recognizing the Saints in icons. If icons, with their minimal means of expression, required an active spectator's participation, it was in the sense that the spectator participated in and employed, as Dagron puts it, the "collective imagination."[238]

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[237] Ibid., 212-213.

It is important, therefore, to make a distinction between these two types of imagination: individual and collective. Yes, the spectator uses imagination to fill in the gaps of the icon, but he is referring to a collective imagination, not his own individual imagination. The role of the individual viewer was simply to recognize the Saint based on his familiarity with this larger cultural tradition or "collective imagination." This role and the subtle distinction it embodies were stressed still more during the Iconoclastic debates. The relationship between Byzantine icons and any one individual was not seen as the exercise a single imagination, but as an exercise of recognition.

There were several possibly ways a Byzantine spectator might identify a Saint. After the fall of Iconoclasm, for example, it was required that each icon be marked with the name of the Saint it depicted.[239] Besides this, Byzantine viewers recognized certain visual characteristics, distinguishing one Saint from another:

> …evangelists, for example, wore the antique tunic and himation and displayed their books, holy bishops were attired in their liturgical vestments

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[238] Dagron, Holy Images and Likeness, 33.

[239] Henry Maguire, *The Icons of their Bodies* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996), 40; Karen Boston, "The Power of Inscription and the Trouble with Texts," in *Icons and Word: the Power of Images in Byzantium*, eds. Antony Eastmond, and Liz James (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003).

> and also held books or scrolls, monks wore their habits, soldiers wore their military tunics and cuirasses and brandished their weapons, and doctors grasped their medicine boxes and surgical instruments. … bishops and monks were often portrayed as old, with white or grayish hair, while doctors and soldiers were shown younger; women with a few exceptions, also tended to be shown as young.[240]

Modern spectators, unfamiliar with this visual language and its specific vocabulary, therefore are often confused by Byzantine icons, attributing their surreal nature to the iconographer's lack of skill, or an especially low set of standards.[241] To a contemporary viewer, realism is an optical illusion, mimicking, as its name would suggest, reality, while rendering three-dimensional space, perspective, and light. Matthias Grunewald's *Isenheim Altar* is an early example of Christian painting which is realistic in the modern sense of the term.

Byzantine artists and spectators, it should be stressed, were not so naïve as to consider their "abstract" images optically indistinguishable from the originals. Their claims of realism implied something else. By realism the Byzantines meant the representation of a historical personality who was "real," or, in other words, not invented by the artist or drawn from the imagination of a spectator. An icon was a representation of a historical person that had been seen and depicted from life by an iconographer and easily recognized by icon-worshippers. This understanding is consistent with the texts both of the Seventh Ecumenical Council and the apologists of iconography:

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[240] Henry Maguire, *The Icons of their Bodies,* 13.
[241] Maguire, "Originality in Byzantine Art," 102.

> Christians have been taught to depict the icon of that nature of his according to which He has been seen, not of that according to which He is invisible; the latter is uncircumscribable.[242]
>
> For if we were to make an image of the invisible God, we would really sin; for it is impossible to depict one who is incorporeal and formless, invisible and uncircumscribable. ... For if we make an image of God who in his ineffable goodness became incarnate and was seen upon earth in the flesh, and lived among humans, and assumed the nature and density and form and color of flesh, we do not go astray.[243]

This understanding of realism is also found in the liturgical text of the *Triumph of Orthodoxy*, a feast that marked the end of the second period of Iconoclasm. It is not then surprising that the feast, celebrating the restoration of icon-worship, also honors Theothocos and the Nativity of Christ. The Incarnation made God visible and therefore describable, justifying the practice of iconography. Likewise, icons make visible the reality of the Incarnation. The *Kontaktion* of the Triumph of Orthodoxy proclaims:

> No one could describe the word of the Father; but when He took flesh from you, Theothocos, He accepted to be described, and restored the fallen image

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[242] Sahas, *Icon and Logos: Sources in Eight-Century Iconoclasm,* 84.

[243] John of Damascus, Saint, *Three Treatise on the Divine Images*, 82.

to its former state by uniting it to divine beauty. We confess and proclaim our salvation in word and images!" "Raising the image of Your flesh, o Lord, we kiss it with love, explaining the great mystery of Your care: *not in delusion* have You revealed Yourself to us as the theomachist children of Mament say, but *in the truth and in the nature of your flesh*…

These realism claims focus on "Who is depicted" rather than "How is one depicted."[244] A Byzantine iconographer used minimal means of expression, only those that helped to *identify* a Saint; anything that could distract one from seeing the Saint was avoided. Such images should naturally look abstract in the eyes of a modern spectator, but they were realistic in the factual or historical sense. This is what confuses a modern reader in the realistic descriptions of the Byzantines about their "abstract" icons.

Summarizing, the Byzantine realistic painting did not purport to be an illusory visual replica of the original, but rather a recognizable portrait of an existing person. If one looks for parallels, he may come up with Egyptian papyri descriptions of people, an official mode of identification that existed in Egypt, which looks like "the impersonal photograph,"[245] or a "police description" as Furst calls it.[246]

The Byzantine verbal description of Saints and the Byzantine icons, seemingly schematic or abstract, can be compared to the facial composites used by police. A facial composite is a kind of identity-photograph composed from a verbal description of a person. Such facial composites are based on existing types and are not detailed.[247] This is similar to the Byzantine technique, which Demus calls "divisibility":

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[244] Parry Kenneth, *Depicting the Word: Byzantine Iconophile Thought of the Eighth and Ninth Century,* 27.

[245] Geneva Misener "Iconistic Portraits," *Classical Philology* 19 (2) (1924): 97—123, 111.

[246] Jakov Nikolaevich Ljubarskij, "Man in Byzantine Historiography from John Malalas to Michael Pselos," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 46 (1992): 177—186.

> …the representation of the human figure, which was divided into its component parts, parceled out, as it were and put together like model figures, with the joints clearly articulated and the movements somewhat mechanized and overstressed. The same spirit of division and articulation ruled Byzantine composition: the arrangement is simple, legible, paratactic and quasi-geometrical; compositions can easily be taken to pieces, and every of their parts may be substituted by another.[248]

There is not enough available detail here to make an exact realistic copy of a person, but there is a unique combination of features which may, used in the right combination, characterize that person. The identifying features do not create an illusion of the original, but distinguish one person from another. A portrait is depicted not by approaching a person's essence, but by the combination and adjustment of existing types: "The soldier Saint Theodore, as we have seen was given a substance and movement in contrast to monks, but in contrast to the Virgin he appears rigid and two-dimensional."[249] A portrait simply depicted a person's *hypostasis*.

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[247] Dagron, "Holy Images and Likeness," 26.
[248] Otto Demus, *Byzantine Art and the West* (New York: New York University Press, 1970), 12-13.
[249] Maguire, *The Icons of their Bodies*, 89.

Visual realism: hypostasis

I return to the question I asked in my second chapter: What is in the image of a person?—one's appearance? One's body? One's soul? Iconoclasts believed that a depiction of Christ was not possible. In rendering only Christ's visible features, Christ's human nature would be separated from the invisible, unrepresentable part—Christ's divine nature—and this was heresy: "it reinstates Nestorius, who divided the one Son and Word of God, Who for us became man, into duality of sons."[250] Iconophiles however insisted that icons did not separate the visible part—human body—from the invisible, because they never truly meant to depict even the *body*:

> An icon lacks not only a soul but also the very substance of the body, I mean flesh, muscles, nerves, bones, and elements, that is, blood, phlegm, fluid, and gall, the blending of which it is impossible for one to see in an icon. If these were seen in the icon, we would call this a "man" and not an "icon of a man.[251]

The icon of a person is thus neither a person's *body* nor its representation and for this reason, as well, it could never be photographically realistic.

Both iconoclasts and iconophiles also agreed that icons did not represent the soul either. An icon was not able to render the invisible; neither the soul nor the divine nature of God. This again gave rise to iconoclastic accusations of separating the invisible (what cannot be depicted) from the visible (what is depicted by means of iconography). Iconophiles explained that the absence of something in the image did not imply a separation from it. They drew a parallel with the portraits of Peter and Paul:

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[250] Sahas, *Icon and Logos: Sources in Eight-Century Iconoclasm*, 76.
[251] Ibid., 77.

> ...when Peter and Paul are depicted, one can see them. Their souls, however, are not present in the icons. Even if the body of Peter were present, one could not see his soul. Since one cannot see it [the soul], who then of those adhere to the truth can say—unless in thought only—that the body of Peter is separated from his soul?[252]

The misunderstanding lay in the very ways the iconophiles and iconoclasts thought. Iconoclasts challenged iconophiles by asking what precisely is painted in an icon, presuming that either of the two possible responses—body or soul—would constitute a heresy. However, the iconophiles argued that they depicted neither body nor soul, but what they saw. They by no means pretended that icons were able to represent the *invisible*—God or the soul:

> For if we were to make an image of the invisible God, we would really sin; for it is impossible to depict one who is incorporeal and formless, invisible and uncircumscribable.[253]

> The icon lacks a soul—something impossible to describe, for it is invisible.[254]

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[252] Ibid., 92.
[253] John of Damascus, Saint. *Three Treatise on the Divine Images*, 61.
[254] Sahas, *Icon and Logos: Sources in Eight-Century Iconoclasm*, 157.

> I do not depict the invisible divinity, but I depict God made visible in the flesh.[255]

Again, these statements express the visual realism of the iconophiles. They boldly depicted only that which they saw. If something was visible, it could be legitimately represented. This argument is the opposite of the Neo-Platonic tradition of regarding a person's appearance as a window to his inner self, a way of reading character.[256] Misener traces the history of the latter: "Socrates was, Aristotle relates, the subject of the first practical demonstration of character-reading at Athens."[257] In contrast to this, the defenders of iconography, including Theodore the Studite, claimed that appearance does not disclose the inner qualities of character.[258]

Iconographers depicted neither body nor soul, but what they saw. So what precisely did they see and thus paint? The iconophiles' response to this question made a unique contribution in theory of identity: the iconographer depicted *hypostasis*. When the painter portrayed St. Nicolas, the image represented neither St. Nicolas' body nor his soul; it represented *St. Nicolas* himself, who has body and soul, even though the soul can not reveal itself through Nicolas' appearance and therefore cannot be represented. In short, iconophiles depicted Nicolas *hypostasis* (see Figures 3.3. and 3.4.).

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[255] John of Damascus, Saint. *Three Treatise on the Divine Images*, 86.

[256] Geneva Misener, "Iconistic Portraits"; Elizabeth C. Evans, "Roman Descriptions of Personal Appearance in History and Biography," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 46 (1935): 43—84; Elizabeth. C. Evans, "Physiognomics in the Ancient World," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 89 (5) (1969).

[257] Misener "Iconistic Portraits," 105.

[258] Feodor Studit, "Tret'e oproverzhenie ikonobortsev."

Figure 3.3. *St. Nicolas*. Tver school. Photograph by the author. Courtesy of The Andrei Rublev Museum of Early Russian Art.

Figure 3.4. *St. Nicolas*. Rostov school. Photograph by the author. Courtesy of The Andrei Rublev Museum of Early Russian Art.

According to the iconophiles, when we see a person, we see not that person's "personhood," only that, that person differs from others, is distinguishable from others. This last possibility is what is meant by *hypostasis*. To depict a person's essence is impossible, but a depiction of one's *hypostasis* is very much possible. Theodore the Studite describes St. Peter, for example, by his distinguishing visible features: his type of nose, the color of his hair, face, and eyes.[259] Due to his *hypostasis*, he is recognizable.

Theodore of Raif, finding it difficult to give a precise general definition of *hypostasis*, instead elaborates with examples. He cites, for instance, the *hypostasis* of John the Baptist.[260] John the Baptist, the son of Zacharias and Elisabeth, grew up in the wilderness. He had white skin and black hair. He wore a camel hide and a leather belt. He ate locusts and wild honey. He baptized the Lord in Jordan. He was jailed and beheaded at the council of Herodias. These features distinguish John the Baptist from any other Saint. Eastern Christian icons capitalize precisely on these kinds of defining features, making John the Baptist, for example, easily recognizable.

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[259] Ibid.
[260] Feodor Studit, *Poslaniya: kniga 2*.

Unlike the iconophiles, the iconoclasts did try to grasp some essence of a person. A leader of the iconoclasts, John the Grammarian attempted to define person:

> It is hopeless to characterize a man, unless one has been lead to this by words. When it happens that the particular features of a man are seen to be of a similar form and like those of another, it is not possible effectively to grasp them and render them by visual means. For if his people or his father are not described, not the fact that he is blessed in his deeds, his companions and the customs of his land, all of which are made known by verbal means, and through which one might judge his worth, it follows that the visual arts are a waste of time. Hence it is impossible truthfully to discern the man by means of depictions.[261]

Furthermore, the iconoclasts argued that after death bodily characteristics become irrelevant. Emperor Constantine V wrote:

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[261] Charles Barber, "Icon and Portrait in the Trial of Symeon the New Theologian," in *Icon and Word: the Power of Images in Byzantium*, eds. Antony Eastmond and Liz James (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 116.

> Since that which concerns Christ is dispersed and dissolved, it follows also that that which concerns the Saints disappears at the same time, and that which remains is not worth remembering.[262]

There is a recognizable dualism of body and soul in the iconoclastic position. The iconophile recognized no such dualism; the visual image is identical with a person in his hypostasis whether he is alive or dead. The memory of a person is inseparable from his portrait, which never ceases to show that person's *hypostasis* (see Figure 3.5).

The iconoclasts, as I have argued, were not defined by a negative attitude toward art—they could appreciate it, as many historical examples show. The line that separated iconoclasts from iconophiles was not the rejection or acceptance of art, but the status each group gave to the visual. The iconoclasts believed that, in their attempt to represent the essence of a person, visual artists were wasting their time. The iconophiles saw the visual as crucial in the act of identifying a person's distinguishing visual features making that person recognizable. The visual image is present in a person,[263] and, in turn, it serves as a historical testimony of that person's existence. The iconoclastic refusal to depict historical figures could possibly lead to a situation where the very existence of the figures might become uncertain. In this case "no image" equaled "no person."

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[262] Charles Barber, "Writing on the Body: Memory, Desire, and the Holy in Iconoclasm," in *Desire and Denial in Byzantium*, ed. Liz James (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), 111-120.
[263] Feodor Studit, Tret'e oproverzhenie ikonobortsev, 327.

John of Damascus' *Dialectica*, a kind of Orthodox glossary, clarifies the meaning of hypostasis by comparing it with other concepts including "being," "accidents," "individual," and "face."[264]

> Being is the common name for all things which are. It is divided into substance and accident. Substance is the principal of these two, because it has existence in itself and not in another. Accident, on the other hand, is that which cannot exist in itself but is found in the substance.[265]

A body is a substance, while the color of a body is an accident.[266] The body exists in of itself, while color needs the body to exist. Accidents are connected to difference and quality.[267] An accident can either be separable or inseparable. An accident is separable if it is sometimes present and other times absent in hypostasis. It is inseparable if it can never be separate from a hypostasis. To sit, to stand, to be sick, to be healthy are examples of separable accidents. The form of the nose and the color of the eyes are inseparable accidents.[268] Inseparable accidents distinguish one hypostasis from another. John of Damascus calls them a characteristic peculiarity. Hypostasis can change over time in separable accidents, and this type distinguishes a single hypostasis from itself over time. Age, for example, is a separable accident.

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[264] See English translation in: John of Damascus, Saint, *Saint John of Damascus: Writings*, trans. Frederic Chase (New York: Fathers of the Church, Inc., 1958); Russian translation: Ioann Damaskin, *Tvorenija prepodobnogo Ioanna Damaskina: istochnik znanij* [The works of Saint John of Damascus: Fountain of knowledge] (M.: Indrik, 2002).

[265] John, of Damascus, *Saint John of Damascus: Writings*, 19; Ioann Damaskin, Tvorenija prepodobnogo Ioanna Damaskina: istochnik znanij, 63.

[266] Feodor Raifskij, "Predugotovlenie" [Appointment], in *Prepodobnyj Anastasij Sinait: Izbrannye proizvedenija* [Saint Anastasias of Sinai: Selected works] (M., 2003), 419.

[267] John of Damascus, Saint, 19; Ioann Damaskin, 63.

[268] John, of Damascus, Saint, 20; Ioann Damaskin, 63.

One hypostasis is different, however, from another in inseparable accidents such as eye color.[269] Both types of accidents, separable and inseparable, characterize a hypostasis.

There are notions similar to the idea of hypostasis. The concept of the *individual*, for example, is quite close to that of hypostasis, and they are easily confused. "Individuality," though, focuses on indivisibility rather than defining characteristics. Still, it too is important for understanding of the iconophiles approach to a person:

> The term individual, however, is principally used as meaning that which, although it is divisible, does not maintain its species intact after the division. Thus Peter is divided into soul and body, but neither is soul by itself a perfect man or a perfect Peter, nor is the body.[270]

The icon shows neither Peter's body nor his soul, but the whole Peter, an individual.

The concept of *prosopo* (πρόσωπο) was even used as a synonym of hypostasis. It is usually translated into English as "person." However, the Greek *prosopo*, as well as its Russian equivalent, *litso*, mean both person and face. For John of Damascus, hypostasis and face simply meant the same thing:

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[269] John, of Damascus, 43; Ioann Damaskin, 76.
[270] John, of Damascus, Saint, 58.

> …that which by its own subsistence subsists of itself from its substance and accidents, is numerically different, and signifies a certain one, as, for example, Peter, and Paul, and this horse.[271]

The face reveals itself to others; it distinguishes one person from another. Faces, therefore, are the focus of Byzantine icons. To represent a person here means to represent his or her face. The face even provides a means of measuring body proportion: "Learn, o pupil, that in the whole figure for a man there are nine faces, that is to say nine measures, from the forehead to the soles of the feet."[272] Even the verbal portraits of the Saints, or the *eikonismos*, provided detailed descriptions of faces. They were then collected into special compendiums, serving as manuals for iconographers. The *eikonismos* were included in the vitae and ecclesiastical history as well, and were an intrinsic part of iconophile culture.[273] Examples of the earliest *eikonismos*, from *Concerning Bodily Characteristics*, believed[274] to come from the fifth to sixth centuries, include the following:

> The blessed *Dionisius* had this physical appearance: of medium stature, thin, white complexion, sallow skin, somewhat flat-nosed, puckered eyebrows, hollow eyes, [an air of] continual concentration, big ears, long grey hair, fairly long beard of sparse growth, slightly corpulent, long fingers.[275]

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[271] John of Damascus, Saint, 68.

[272] Paul Hetherington, ed., *The Painter's Manual of Dyonisius of Fourna* (London: the Sagittarius Press, 1981), 12.

[273] A.P. Golubtsov, *Iz chteniĭ po tserkovnoĭ arkheologiĭ i liturgike* (Sergiev Posad, 1918).

[274] Dagron, "Holy Images and Likeness."

[275] Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire: 312—1453*, 214.

Gregory of Nazianzinus: not a tall man, somewhat sallow but pleasing, flat-nosed, straight eyebrows, gentle and kindly expression, although one of his eyes, namely the right one, was rather stern, being contracted in the corner by scar; beard not long but fairly thick, bald, white-haired, the tip of his beard having a smoky appearance.[276]

Basil the Cappodocian was a tall man, straight of build, lean, swarthy, his complexion having an admixture of pallor; long nose, arched eyebrows, contracted brow, severe and anxious expression, forehead lined with a few wrinkles, elongated cheeks, concave temples, hair somewhat in need of clipping, rather long beard, half-grey[277] (see Figure 3.5.)

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[276] Ibid.
[277] Ibid.

Figure 3.5. *St. Basil the Great*. Photograph by the author. Courtesy of The Andrei Rublev Museum of Early Russian Art.

Gregory of Nyssa: in all respects similar to the former excerpt for being grey-haired and slightly more pleasing [in appearance].[278]

Athanasius of Alexandria: a man of medium stature, fairly broad, stopped, pleasing countenance, healthy complexion, receding hair, hooked nose, his jaw covered with a wide but not very long beard, big mouth, very grizzled, [his hair] not pure white but of a yellowish cast.[279]

Cyril of Alexandria: of a stature a little lower than normal, his appearance fairly healthy, forehead marked by big, bushy eyebrows of an arched shape;

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[278] Ibid.
[279] Ibid.

> long nose, nostrils divided by a projecting partition, taut cheeks, rather thick lips, forehead slightly bald; adorned with a dense and long beard, curly hair of a light, half-grey color.[280]

The *eikonismos* are typical verbal portraits of Saints and the way they were laid out remained unchanged for centuries. Iconographers followed their example: an eighteenth century systematic iconography manual by Dionysius of Fourna, for instance, stresses that the focus be on the nose, beard, and hair:

> First make the first face, which you divide into three, making the first division the forehead, the second the nose and the third the beard. Draw the hair above the face to the height of one nose-length; again measure into thirds the distance between the beard and the nose; the chin takes up two of the divisions and the mouth one, while the throat is one-nose length.[281]

The pattern of the face is unique, and the *eikonismos* provide the details (the color and style of hair, the length and the form of beard, the form of eyebrows and possible peculiarities such as scars) necessary to distinguish one Saint from another. There is again an immediate parallel with the facial composites used by police: the image does not grasp a person as he is, but what makes this person different from others.

The descriptions of the Saints which followed the earliest *eikonismos*, also found in *Concerning Bodily Characteristics,* are very similar in style, except that they also describe clothing and those attributes—often objects the Saint may be holding—which identify to what group or profession the Saint belonged: enlighteners and teachers held books, warriors held swords, doctors—boxes of medicine, etc.[282]

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[280] Ibid., 215.
[281] Paul Hetherington, ed., *The Painter's Manual of Dyonisius of Fourna*, 12.

Dagron remarks that, by the beginning of the sixth century, visual images had become more independent of verbal descriptions. He continues that after the sixth century there was no need for, in his words, "the words detour"—"the image simply reproduced itself."[283] Image patterns played an important role in the "technique" of image reproduction.[284] These patterns replaced the role of the *eikonismos*, and the more detailed written descriptions that followed, helping the artist to identify each Saint's hypostasis.

Documents indicate that there also existed boundaries over which an iconographer could not step. The Seventh Ecumenical Council reduced the role of the iconographer to the technical work of an artisan or a trained craftsman, while the composition of icons and their content were dictated by tradition.[285] This judgment already assumed the existence of visual icon patterns that would guide the iconographer. Maguire insists that these iconographic laws were established after the two periods of Iconoclasm.[286] However, the reliance on iconographic visual traditions existed even before this. The vita of St. Pancratius of Taormina, for example, tells that St. Peter once sent Pancratius and a preacher, Marcian, to the

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[282] Nikolai Vasil'evich Pokrovskij, *Sijskii ikonopisnyj podlinnik* [An Iconographer's pattern-book: The Siya tradition] (Tipografiia Skorokhodova, 1898).
[283] Dagron, Holy Images and Likeness, 28.
[284] Demus (1970) and Kirtzinger (1975) demonstrated the role of verbal instructions and cursory sketches in the mural decorations.
[285] Sahas, *Icon and Logos: Sources in Eight-Century Iconoclas*, 84.
[286] Maguire, *The Icons of their Bodies*.

West to set up a church. He provided them with the necessary equipment, which included "two volumes…of the divine picture-stories… containing the decoration of the church, i.e. the pictorial story (*eikonike historia*) of the Old and New Testaments."[287]

Even today, contemporary Russian iconographic guidebooks lay out special patterns outlining appropriate Orthodox compositions, named *prorisi* (tracings) and *perevody* (transfers).[288] These patterns are tracings of existing icons. The methods of transferring these outlines vary. One example is explained by the Russian Orthodox iconographer and specialist in the history of icon painting, Fyodor Kalikin:

> If an icon painter wanted to make a replica of an icon outline he delicately mixed some black paint with garlic juice, then made an outline of the whole composition of the icon with a squirrel hair brush, the outline being neither thinner nor thicker than the original. When the outline was completed, he took a blank sheet of paper, placed it over the just outlined icon and, holding it with his left hand, lifted a part of the sheet with his right hand and blew on it slightly to moisten a portion of the outline. Then he rubbed and pressed the moistened paper with his right hand and the black paint mixed garlic juice

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[287] Ibid., 137.

[288] Viktor Ivanovich Butovskii, *Stroganovskiĭ ikonopisnyĭ litsevoĭ podlinnik*; Christopher P.Kell, ed., *An Iconographer's Pattern-book : the Stroganov Tradition* (Torrance: Oakwood Publications, 1992); Nikodim Pavlovich Kondakov, *Ikonografiia Gospoda Boga i Spasa nashego Ĭisusa Khrista*; G.Markelov, *Kniga ikonnykh obraztov: 500 podlinnykh prorisei i perevodov s russkikh ikon XV-XIX vekov*. T. I.; G. Markelov, *Kniga ikonnykh obraztov : 500 podlinnykh proriseĭ i perevodov s russkikh ikon XV-XIX vekov*. T. II. ; Gregory Melnick, , ed. *An Icon Painter's Notebook: the Bolshakov Edition (an Antology of Source Materials* (Torrance: Oakwood Publications, 1995); Gregory Melnick, , ed., *An Iconographer's Sketchbook: Drawings and Patterns*. Vol. 1. (Torrance: Oakwood Publications, 1997); Gregory Melnick, ed., *An Iconographer's Sketchbook: Drawings and Patterns*. Vol. 2. (Torrance: Oakwood Publications, 1998); Nikolai Vasil'evich Pokrovskij, *Sijskii ikonopisnyj podlinnik*.

left a negative imprint on the white paper. The very imprint of this invested outline is called *proris'*.[289]

The tracings of previous icons (*proris'*) act just as negatives do in photography. They provide a kind of mirror reflection. The transfer (*perevod*) is the imprint of this tracing on the paper. A moistened sheet of paper is put onto the tracing and pressed—this gives the transfer in its original form. The portrait outline inevitably avoids superfluous detail. It keeps only what Theodore the Studite calls the *character*, which unites various portraits of the same person and makes the copy realistic in the Byzantine meaning of the word: "Every artificial image is a likeness of that whereof it is the image, and it exhibits in itself, by way of imitation, the form (*character*) of its model (*archetupon*)..."[290]

Theodore's *character* (χαρακτηρ) is often interpreted in the Platonic sense, like the eidos (ειδος), the inner idea of a thing.[291] However, this explanation contradicts the visual realism of iconophiles—to represent only what is seen, and not to represent any invisible things like the soul or an inner idea. Regarding the character as the inner idea of a thing is due rather to the iconoclasts than iconophiles. Icons represent the hypostasis, a concrete person, not a Platonic *idea* of a person.

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[289] G. Markelov, *Kniga ikonnykh obraztov: 500 podlinnykh prorisei i perevodov s russkikh ikon XV-XIX vekov*, 5-6.
[290] Cyril Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire: 312—1453.*
[291] V.V. Bychkov, *Malaia istoriia Vizantiskoi estetiki* [The short history of Byzantine aesthetics] (Kiev: Izd. "Put' k istine," 1991), 181-182.; L. M. Evseeva, *Afonskaia kniga obraztsov* (*Athos Pattern-book*) *(*M., 1998), 13.

Figure 3.6. *Christ in Majesty*. Early XI century. Photo by the author.
Courtesy of The Andrei Rublev Museum of Early Russian Art.

Icons depict hypostasis, and this distinguishes iconography from art. An icon is realistic, but not in the sense of representing the body with naturalistic precision. However, while the icon may seem to be deliberately unrealistic in its technique, in reality it only avoids unnecessary detail, which might distract the viewer from the focus of the face. Understanding this distinction, contemporary students of art should not compare iconography with unrealistic modern art. Icons, for instance, never attempt to depict anything invisible like essence, senses or impressions. The Impressionists, on the other hand, were very much attracted to these intangible notions, however allusive they might be: "the visible, in continual flux, became fugitive."[292] The iconographers represented that which was or can be seen and the impression it left. The Byzantine iconographer saw people's hypostases and they depicted these hypostases.

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[292] John Berger, *Ways of Seeing: Based on the BBC Television Series* (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1977), 18.

Chapter 4. Modern concepts: looking for a context

In the previous chapter, I addressed the comparative approach as seen by the Byzantine defenders of icons. Icons, they argued, depicted a person's hypostasis. This *hypostasis* distinguished one person from another—it identified a saint in opposition to all others. The visual aspect played the key role in such identification. The iconophiles' attitude toward the visual image of a person was entirely different from the iconoclastic approach, which I described in the second chapter. The iconoclastic attitude was based on the belief that the essence of a person could not be grasped by his or her likeness. I have called this approach "essentialist."

This chapter will return to the essentialist approach as it has manifested itself in modern art and contemporary photography and elaborated by renowned contemporary thinkers. I will start this chapter with the traditional debate on "art versus photography," showing that on a deeper level this dispute was not about art and photography as such, but rather about the most effective means to grasp a person's essence. It is that desire which binds modern art and contemporary photography under the same essentialist approach. This aim also leads one to the question "what is inside of a person?" as well as those old concerns raised by modern theoreticians of identity. I will then give a brief review of the modern theory of identity. After this, I will proceed to another Western concept referring to person—subjectivity. I will illustrate the cultural roots of subjectivity in late Gothic and early Renaissance culture by the examples of spiritual writings, architecture, literature and painting. Icons, early photographic portraits, and photo IDs—none of these things can be explained with these Western concepts of identity and subjectivity. I will, therefore, argue that the notions of identity and subjectivity embody the essentialist approach, while Eastern Christian icons illustrate the comparative approach. I will conclude the chapter by examining the exchange between these two different approaches: the visual and the essentialist. The first is tied to the term *hypostasis*, represented in icons, early daguerreotypes and photo IDs; the latter is tied to the notions of identity and subjectivity, having been developed by modern thinkers.

Art versus photography

The separating line between Byzantine iconoclasts and iconophiles lies in their conflicting concepts of the legitimacy of human representations. It was not necessarily a dispute about the legitimacy of art. Indeed, some iconoclasts were art connoisseurs. The Byzantine iconoclasts felt that icons were an inappropriate means of expressing the complex nature of human beings. Icons were simply a falsification of human nature. Icons could only capture the external, visible part of a person, but never that inner, invisible component. A portrait was only a material copy of something material, the body and its appearance. The iconoclasts, therefore, feared that icons, depicting only that which is tangible, separated a person from his or her intangible essence. Thus, the question of icons turned to the question of the true nature of people: What is the truest image of a person? Which part of a person, exactly, does a portrait portray?

These concerns resurfaced in the nineteenth century in the West after the invention of photography. The debates between the connoisseurs of art and the proponents of photography echoed the earlier iconoclastic debates. Photography's delivery of a coldly exact likeness was weighed, unfavorably, against the freedom of imagination in art, specifically the ability of modern art to express the invisible. The problem of person was raised again. A disdain for exact likeness, as well as the belief that photographs somehow misinterpret human nature—these reactions to photographic portraits illustrated a particular approach to the idea of person. They reflected the western concept of identity. I will show that this concept is traditionally iconoclastic.

The invention of photography seemed to eliminate any need for realistic art. Art's traditional role of rendering a copy of external reality had been usurped. A painter, for instance, could hardly compete with the cold precision of a machine. Instead, the artist was prompted to express something intangible, something which could not be reproduced by the machine. This discussion followed a platonic logic, echoing the Byzantine iconoclastic debates with their platonic dichotomy of the external and visible versus the inner and concealed. Photography duplicated only an appearance. It could not, for example, accomplish the impressionists' task; representing the essence of a thing. John Berger describes Impressionism:

> For the Impressionists the visible no longer presented itself to man in order to be seen. On the contrary, the visible, in continual flux, became fugitive. For the cubists the visible was no longer what confronted the single eye, but the totality of possible views taken from points all around the objects (or person) being depicted.[293]

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[293] John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1972), 18.

That intent links the impressionists with the Byzantine iconoclasts, while exposing an important distinction between the art movement and the Byzantine iconophiles. To an iconophile, the visible is simply that which is seen through the eyes, but to an impressionist the visible is concealed—fugitive.

Photographers were seen as mere imitators of external reality; their machines were not able to catch the *eidos* of that reality. Baudelaire expressed his concerns about Daguerreotype:

> An avenging God has heard the prayers of this multitude; Daguerre was his messiah. And then they said to themselves: Since photography provides us with every desirable guarantee of exactitude' (they believe that, poor madmen!) 'art is photography.' From that moment onwards, our loathsome society rushed, like Narcissus, to contemplate its trivial image on the metallic plate. … Let photography quickly enrich the traveller's album, and restore to his eyes the precision his memory may lack; let it adorn the library of the naturalist, magnify microscopic insects, even strengthen, with a few facts, the hypotheses of the astronomer; let it, in short be the secretary and record-keeper of whomsoever needs absolute material accuracy for professional reasons. … But if once it be allowed to impinge on the sphere of the intangible and the imaginary, on anything that has value solely because man adds something to it from his soul, then woe betide us![294]

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[294] Charles-Pierre Baudelaire, *Baudelaire: Selected Writings on Art and Literature (Penguin Classics)* (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 2006 (1972)), 295-297.

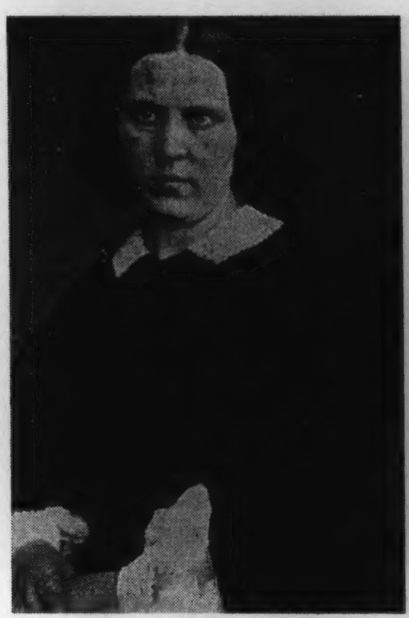

Figure 4.1. Daguerreotype. W.A. Eurenius & P.L. Quist. Fotografiska Atelier, Stokholm, Regeringsgatan. Courtesy of an owner Åke Hultman.

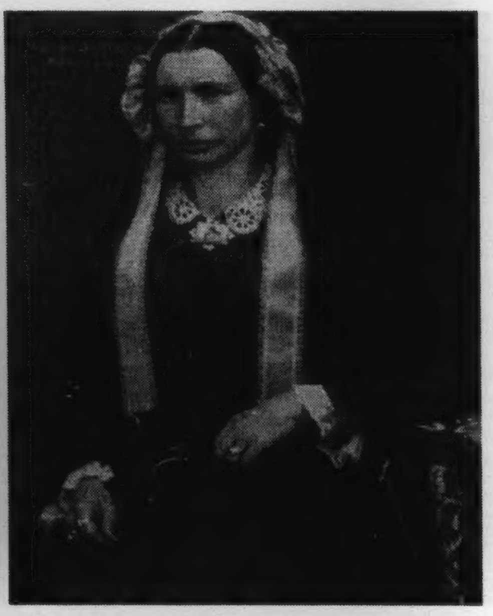

Figure 4.2. Daguerreotype. Courtesy of an owner Åke Hultman.

Visual realism—representing only that which is seen by an unimaginative eye—is the sphere of photography, while the privilege of art lies in its ability to express "the intangible" and the invisible. Photography simply compensates for the insufficient "precision of memory." The opponents of daguerreotypes saw photography much as Plato saw writing[295]; that is as the elixir of forgetfulness, ultimately failing as an effective mnemonic device, because the comforting existence of external reminders promotes the disuse and atrophy of internal memory.

A German publication *Leipziger Stadtanzeiger* proclaimed in 1839:

> To hold fast fleeting mirror images is not only something impossible—as has been shown after a thorough German examination—but the mere wish to do

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[295] Plato, "Phaedrus," in *Symposium and Phaedrus*, trans. Tom Griffith (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989), 172.

> so is sacrilege. Man has been created in the image of God and God's image cannot be produced by a human machine. At most, the imaginative artist, guided by divine inspiration and in a spirit of profound consecration, may, at the command of his genius, dare to reproduce the God-like human features without the help of any machine.[296]

Not unlike the arguments of the Byzantine iconoclasts, *Leipziger Stadtanzeiger* objected to a specific representative image, not representative images at large. It questions those likenesses produced by machine. What, after all, could a machine copy? What could it reproduce?—only a cold replica of appearance, not an expression of the more intangible human features.

In 1928 Alexander Rodchenko, a Russian avant-garde photographer, published an article in response to a conversation he had with an artist.[297] Rodchenko's opponent had insisted that art achieves something which is impossible for photography. A portrait prepared by an artist expressed the sum of the contemplated moments that revealed the characteristic features of the person portrayed.

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[296] thttp://web.telia.com/~u66012676/Warning.htm

[297] Alexander Rodchenko, "Protiv summirovannogo portreta za momental'nyi snimok" [Snapshot against summarized portrait], *Novyj lef*, N 4 (1928); see English translation in: Aleksandr Mikhailovich Rodchenko, *Aleksandr Rodchenko: Experiments for the Furture: Diaries, Essays, Letters, and Other Writings*, ed. Alexander N. Lavrentiev (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2005).

Figure 4.3. Photograph by Mark Rudelson, *Reflection*.
Courtesy of the photographer.

Rodchenko responded in the manner of avant-garde artists:

> The question of summarized portrait has to be clarified; otherwise we will give in to the current mess. Some say that the portrait has to be artistic. Others, seeking in photography a possibility of summarizing, follow a false path and imitate art—making obscure faces, bluring details—which makes the portrait look not like a given person but rather like Rembrandt's and Carrer's paintings in general. Moreover, a person is not a mere sum—he consists of many sums, sometimes opposite.[298]

As a proponent of art over photography, Rodchenko's opponent countered that art is capable of expressing those features of a person which photography cannot grasp. Photography only reproduces the appearance of a particular person at one particular moment. It is not able to reveal the unique nature of that person. Baudelaire claimed: "I regard it as useless and tedious to copy what is in front of me, because nothing of that satisfies me."[299] The visual, something which is in front of the viewer, is a kind of screen, masking inner life. Photography cannot go beyond this screen; only an artist is able to cut through the external shell.

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[298] Ibid., 14.

Rodchenko did not object to the lofty goal of attaining something intangible. Instead, he questioned the adequacy of the artistic methods being used. He mocked, for example, the obscured faces and blurred details found in the paintings of some artists. As a member of the avant-garde, he suggested that artists embrace modern methods of capturing people and reality—photography. He, therefore, did not object to art as such, but simply to what he considered outdated artistic methods.[300] He developed his own technique of grasping people and things: to shoot not "from the bellybutton" (the perspective, historically imposed by the artists), but from top to bottom or from bottom to top. For example, a photograph of a soviet factory made from top to bottom expresses pride for Soviet industrialization.[301] Likewise, Rodchenko proposed photographing the Eiffel Tower from bottom to top. Only this perspective would adequately emphasize the tower's heavy structure. The Eifel Tower shot "from the bellybutton" looks fragile and this perspective falsifies its nature. In other words, Rodchenko reconsidered the means through which one might effectively represent reality. Hundreds of immediate and objective photographs of a person are far more capable affective of capturing personality than one subjective painting.[302]

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[299] Baudelaire, *Baudelaire: Selected Writings on Art and Literature*, 299.
[300] Rodchenko, "Predosterezhenie" [A warning], *Novyj Lef*, N 11 (1928); see English translation of Rodchenko's letters in Rodchenko, *Aleksandr Rodchenko: Experiments for the Furture*.
[301] Ibid.

George Bernard Shaw expressed a similar opinion. Although he is primarily known as a writer and literary critic, he was also a passionate proponent of photography. He enjoyed taking photographs and enjoyed being photographed. Shaw supported "the claim of photography to be as fine as painting or sculpture,"[303] and insisted that photography become an art form its own right, not merely an extension of these earlier forms. He saw photography as fine art, and treated photographic exhibitions as respectfully as the shows of the Royal Academy—a provocative position in his time. When he did object to photography, he did so on the grounds that the photographer had tried to imitate antiquated artistic methods. He dismissed as old artistic tricks any attempt to "falsify" pictures, seeking somehow to make them appear more artistic.[304] He held the strong belief that the camera should at no time imitate the stroke of the pencil or paintbrush. Photography, according to Shaw, had rendered these tools of artistic representation obsolete. [305] Shaw instead argued that photographers take full advantage of the specifically photographic technique:

> Now some of our photographers … openly try to make their photographs simulate drawings, and even engravings; and they aim, not at representing

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[302] Alexander Rodchenko, "Protiv summirovannogo portreta za momental'nyi snimok" [Snapshot against summarized portrait], *Novyj lef*, N 4 (1928); see English translation of Rodchenko's letters in Rodchenko, *Aleksandr Rodchenko: Experiments for the Furture*.

[303] Bernard Shaw, "Letters to the Editor: Mr. G. Bernard Shaw on the Art Claims of Photography, 1900," in *On Photography*, ed. Bill Jay and Margaret Moore (Salt Lake City: P. Smith Books, 1989), 58.

[304] Ibid.

[305] Bernard Shaw, "The Exhibitions, 1901," in *On Photography*, ed. Bill Jay and Margaret Moore (Salt Lake City: P. Smith Books, 1989), 61.

> nature to the utmost of the camera's power, but at reproducing the Impressionists' version of nature, with all the characteristic shortcomings and drawbacks of the makeshift methods of Impressionism. This modeling of new works of art on old ones, instead of on nature and the artist's own feeling, is no novelty: it is an Academicism pure and simple.[306]

> I affirm the enormous superiority of photography to every other known method of graphic art that aims at depicting the aspects and moods of Nature in monochrome.[307]

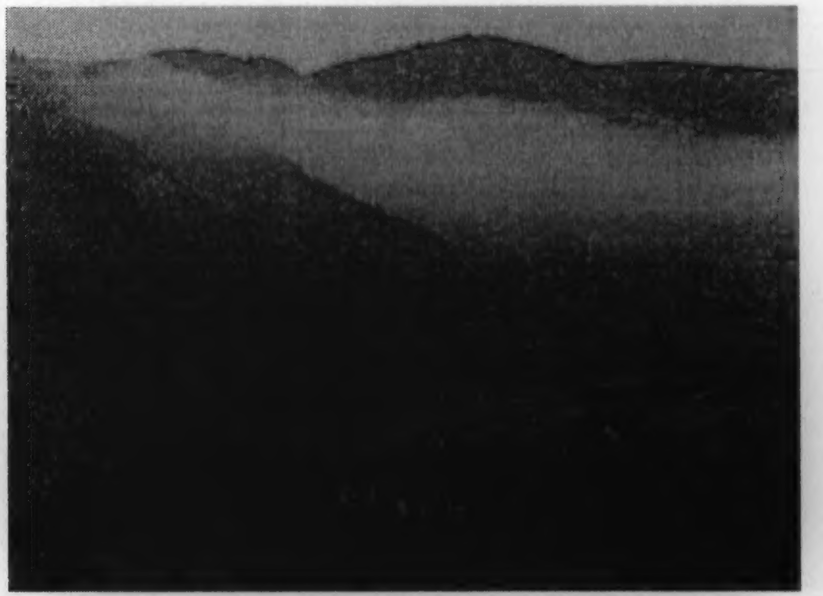

Figure 4.4. Photograph by Mark Rudelson, *Oberwolfach*.
Courtesy of the photographer.

Like Rodchenko, Shaw stressed the advantages of the camera. They both believed that the camera managed to escape the limited single perspective of an artist:

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[306] Bernard Shaw, "The Unmechanicalness of Photography: an Introduction to the London Photographic Exhibitions, 1902," in *On Photography*. Ed. Bill Jay and Margaret Moore (Salt Lake City: P. Smith Books, 1989), 84.

[307] Bernard Shaw,"Mr. George Bernard Shaw on the Foregoing Article, 1907," in *On Photography*, ed.Bill Jay and Margaret Moore (Salt Lake City: P. Smith Books, 1989), 108.

> It is the draughtsman that can give you only one version of a sitter. Velasquez, with all his skills, had only one Philip; Vandyke had only one Charles; Tenniel has only one Gladstone; Furniss only one Sir William Harcourt; and none of these are quite the real ones. The camera, with one sitter, will give you authentic portraits of at least six apparently different persons and characters.[308]

Figure 4.5. Photograph by Mark Rudelson, *Flood*.
Courtesy of the photographer.

The arguments of Alexander Rodchenko and George Bernard Shaw both show that the debate over painting and photography stemmed from a central question—what is better able to represent people and things: painting or photography? Rodchenko and Shaw preferred more modern means of representing reality, namely photography (that which does not attempt to duplicate outdated artistic forms). They did not oppose the larger goal of fine art—to capture the essence of a thing or person. This aim, in fact, was clearly expressed in Shaw's last public words on photography (after the lecture given in 1909, Shaw ceased writing on the subject). In this lecture Shaw described his experience of encountering his own image in a mirror. In the first moment, he mistook the mirror image for another person. He called this "the absolute irrelevance of the body to the soul":

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[308] Bernard Shaw, "The Unmechanicalness of Photography: an Introduction to the London Photographic Exhibitions, 1902," in *On Photography*, ed. Bill Jay and Margaret Moore (Salt Lake City: P. Smith Books, 1989), 77.

> I do not raise the question as to whether my exterior is worthy of my genius—personally, I do not think it is—but it is not this mortally, this corruptible, that is the real me at all. It will be thrown aside and scrapped. The thing we shall hand on is the most vital part of ourselves, and it is this we want to see in our portraits.[309]

The same sort of search for the "most vital part" of a person led the Byzantine iconoclasts to claim symbols, words, deeds and virtues as the truest possible images of a person.[310] Similarly, some modern critics rejected photographs because of an impossibility to reproduce "the most vital part." The defenders of photography, including Shaw and Rodchenko, insisted, on the other hand, that photography was the only effective means of grasping this inner truth. Despite their disagreements—their conflicting opinions on accurate representation—both sides of the argument are linked by this common aim: the attempt to express "the most vital part" of a person. Digital technologies like Photoshop are moving photography further in the direction of art, but early photography was much different. Original photographic plates had low sensitivity, so models had to stay immobile for long periods of time, as if growing into the picture. Benjamin explains that "everything in these early pictures was set up to last."[311] Not surprisingly, at the end of this long photographic process, the image bore a stronger similarity to the original than what we see in contemporary photographs—that original, after all, had been perfectly posed in advance, protected from any interruption or quick movement.

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[309] Bernard Shaw, "George Bernard Shaw Iproves at the Salon. Photography in its Relation to Modern Art, 1909," in *On Photography*, ed. Bill Jay and Margaret Moore (Salt Lake City: P. Smith Books, 1989), 112.

[310] Charles Barber, *Figure and Likeness: On the Limits of Representation in Byzantine Iconoclasm* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

Early portraits, daguerreotypes, were exact copies. Edgar Allan Poe wrote:

> …the Daguerreotyped plate is infinitely (we use the term advisedly) is *infinitely* more accurate in its representation than any painting by human hands. …a more perfect identity of aspect with the thing represented.[312]

Figure 4.6. Daguerreotype. J. W. Bergström , Stockholm.
Courtesy of the owner Åke Hultman.

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[311] Walter Benjamin, "A Short History of Photography," in *Classical Essays on Photography*, ed. Alan Trachtenberg (New Haven: Leete's Island Books, 1980), 250.
[312] Edgar Allan Poe, "The Daguerreotype," *Alexander's Weekly Messanger* 15 (1840) (January 15): 2.

Poe stressed that the main achievement of this newly invented process was its capacity to produce an image bearing an amazing similarity with its subject. Benjamin made a similar observation, noting its contribution to criminology: it was now possible to identify a person through his or her photograph.[313] Also, Sontag makes an interesting observation: in the eightieth and nineteenth centuries "even the very wealthy usually owned just one portrait of themselves or any of their forebears as children, that is, an image of one moment of childhood."[314] The fact that at the sunrise of photography people needed only one photograph, implies that the motivation to be photographed was different from that of unveiling what is hidden in a person. Sontag explains that a photograph confirmed that a person existed. Such motif did not require many photographs. Early photographic portraits confirmed that a person existed.[315] Early photography identified a person: "It is he or she." Although the innovation in photography moved it in the opposite direction, the initial motivation of photography—to identify a person—still exists in photo IDs.

In spite of the fact that Sontag addresses a generous part of her essay *On Photography* to the distinction between art and photography, she realizes that this subject is exhausted. She believes that it does not make sense to regard art and photography as "two potentially competitive systems for producing and reproducing images."[316] Photography is "a medium in which works of art (among other things) are made."[317]

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[313] Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism,* trans. Harry Zohn (London: NLB, 1973).
[314] Sontag, *On Photography*, 165.
[315] Ibid.

On a deeper level, the division is not between art and photography, but between different attitudes concerning what a person actually is. Photography as it was understood by Benjamin and Poe (photography identifies a person) is a different thing than photography as it was understood by Rodchenko and Shaw (it effectively grasps a person). This same demarcation line distinguishes iconoclasts from iconophiles.

Identity: common or proper noun?

What is, then, inside a person? What do artists strive to depict or photograph? A true copy can only be made if the artist understands the idea of the thing. Thus the artist's mission is to grasp "the main idea of the personality,"[318] echoing old platonic principles. Plato discriminated good, or true, images from false images, or simulacra. As I explained in my second chapter; a painter is farther from the truth than a craftsman. The painter is only familiar with the couch's appearance, while the craftsman knows what the thing is made of.[319] Similarly, a photographer is even farther from the truth than a painter, because he only reproduces the appearance of things, while the painter seeks to reveal the ideas being concealed under their exterior.

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[316] Ibid., 148.

[317] Ibid.; Susan Sontag, *Conversation with Susan Sontag (Literary Conversations Series)*, ed. Leland Poague (Mississippi:University Press of Mississippi, 1995), 90.

[318] Galina Vladimirovna Elshevskaia, *Model' i obraz: kontseptsiia lichnosti v russkom i sovetskom zhivopisnom portrete* [Model and image: The concept of personality in the Russian and Soviet pictorial portraits]. *Sovetskij khudozhnik*, 18 (M.: Sovetskii khudozhnik, 1984).

[319] Plato, *The Republic*, ed. G.R.E Ferrari, trans. Tom Griffith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 102-121.

German philosophers have mused on the opposition between the appearance and the essence of things. In Hegel's lectures on art, appearance is justified when it reveals something to the mind. A person's appearance is important as long as it discloses the person's soul:

> Just so the human eye, a man's face, flesh, skin, his whole figure, are a revelation of mind and soul, and in this case the meaning is always something other that what shows itself within the immediate appearance.[320]

Another German philosopher, Heidegger, expressed similar ideas. His *The Origin of the Work of Art* sought to explain art's attempt to reveal that what lies covered beneath physical trappings. He starts, arguing that a thing "does not itself appear."[321] The painting of a thing reveals what a thing is in truth, where truth (aletheia), as Greek language teachers, is "unconcealedness." Heidegger claims: "The painting spoke."[322] As Hegel might have explained it is not a physical eye that sees the truth in the thing, but the mind's eye. The painting *speaks* to the mind rather than *showing itself* to the eye.

> *Techne*, as knowledge experienced in the Greek manner, is a bringing forth of beings in that it *brings forth* what is present as such out of concealdness and specifically *into* the unconcealdness of their appearance; *techne* never signifies the action of making. ... Thus art is the creative preserving of truth

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[320] Georg William Friedrich Hegel, *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics* (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1993), 23.
[321] Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings: From Being and Time (1927) to the Task of Thinking (1964)* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1977), 151.
[322] Ibid., 164.

> in the work. Art then is the becoming and happening of truth. ... Truth is never gathered from ordinary things that are at hand.[323]

This belief in the concealment of truth lowers the visual to an inferior status:

> The external element has no value for us simply as it stands; we assume something further behind it, something inward, a significance, by which the external semblance has a soul breathed into it. It is this, its soul, that the external appearance indicates. ...the inner shows itself in the outer...[324]

This again is in line with the Byzantine iconoclasts, who rejected icons because they represented only the external element, ignoring the particularities of the internal—particularities which "cannot be grasped in any effective manner by appearance," as the iconoclastic patriarch, John the Grammarian, claimed.[325] At the same time, the Byzantine proponents of icons defended visual realism and the evidence of what is seen by the eyes.

Just as Eastern Christian icons did, daguerreotype *portraits* inspired an iconoclastic reaction, especially from contemporary artists. Artists sincerely believed that the exact likeness reproduced by photography failed to reveal anything about the person portrayed. Baudelaire's concerns about the dullness of photographs reflect a particular approach to the person expressed by the concept of identity. The two main western concepts of person—identity and subjectivity—are traditionally iconoclastic concepts and a brief history of the development of the concept "identity" shows this.

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[323] Ibid., 180-183.
[324] Ibid., 23.
[325] Charles Barber, "A Sufficient Knowledge: Icon and Body in Ninth-Century Byzantium," in *Interpreting Christian Art*, eds. Heidi J.Hornic and Mickeal C. Parsons (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2003), 66.

Descartes laid the ground for the study of identity. His mental experiment sprung from the ultimate doubt—to doubt everything including his own senses. This led him to the question "but what then am I?"[326] He looked for a fundamental base which ultimately could not be questioned or doubted:

> I myself, am I not at least something? But I have already denied that I had senses and body. Yet I hesitate, for what follows from that? Am I so dependent on body and senses that I cannot exist without these?[327]

Descartes doubts the body and all its attributes. The only thing which he cannot doubt in is the fact that he doubts. That he thinks; therefore he is, at least he is "a thing which thinks."[328] A person is "a thing which doubts, understands, [conceives], affirms, denies, wills, refuses, which also imagines and feels"[329] Thus, thinking and reasoning are the essence of person, the core for which Descartes searched. This theory charted a dualistic ground for the development of the identity concept. Locke, building upon the ideas of Descartes, introduced the modern concept of identity. Similar to Descartes, Locke looked for the person's essence, or "what *Person* stands for."[330] Locke suggests that "Person":

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[326] Decartes, *The Philosophical Works of Descartes*, ed. Elizabeth S. Haldane and G.R.T. Ross, vol. 1. (Cambridge: University Press, 1968), 153.
[327] Ibid, 150.
[328] Ibid, 153.
[329] Ibid.
[330] John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding,* ed. Peter H. Niddtich (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 335.

> …is a thinking intelligent Being, that has reason and reflection, and can consider itself as itself, the same thinking thing in different times and places; which it does only by that consciousness, which is inseparable from thinking, and as it seems to me essential to it…[331]

Like Descartes, Locke defined reason and thinking as essential to person. However, Locke also introduced something new. The essence of person is not simply thinking, but conscious thinking—it is self:

> For since consciousness always accompanies thinking, and it is that which makes everyone to be, what he calls *self*; and thereby distinguishes himself from all other thinking things, in this alone personal Identity…[332]

Lock examined the uniformity of a rational being or "personal identity," as he put it. If the essence of a person is conscious thinking, something fleeting and intangible, how can a person be the same person at different times? Locke explained:

> For as far as any intelligent Being can repeat the *Idea* of any past Action with the same consciousness it had of it at first, and with the same consciousness it has of any present Action; so far it is the same *personal self*. For it is by the consciousness it has of its present Thoughts and Actions, that it is *self* to it *self* now, and so will be the same self as far as the same consciousness can extend to Actions past or to come; and would be by distance of Time, or change of Substance, no more two *Persons* than a Man be two Men, by

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[331] Ibid.
[332] Ibid.

> wearing other clothes today than he did yesterday, with a long or short sleep between: The same consciousness uniting those distant Actions into same *Person*, whatever Substances contributed to their Production.[333]

The "sameness" of person is thus defined by consciousness. A person's identity is defined only by the person himself, not by others. Only this person has access to what is occurring within the person's consciousness. People are attentive to what is happening in their consciousness and this is what defines self.

Hume continued to develop the concept of personal identity, building on the foundations set by Locke. What is person's essence, how can he catch himself? Hume was interested in "the concern we take in ourselves."[334] He was attentive to *himself,* and to the fact that this self could be captured only through his perceptions. He did not have access to things as they were; only to his perceptions of these things. These perceptions are the essence of person. The relations of ideas produce identity:

> …we may observe that the true idea of the human mind is to consider it as a system of different perceptions or different existences, which are linked together by the relation of cause and effect, and mutually produce, destroy, influence, and modify each other. Our impressions give rise to their correspondent idea; and these ideas, in their turn, produce other impressions.

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[333] Ibid., 336.

[334] David Hume, *Personal Identity,* ed. John Perry (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1975), 163.

> One thought chases another, and draws after it a third, by which it is expelled in its turn.[335]

The later thinkers made an important contribution in advancing the concept of identity, suggesting new criteria for identity. Clearly, consciousness, perceptions, and senses cannot be the exclusive criteria for identity. Other considerations are body, memory, and language. Most probably, this list is far from exhaustive. It may seem that there is no reason to turn back to the "outdated" modern theories of identity like Hume's, Locke's and Descartes' after the recent innovative improvements. However, the aim of my analysis is to avoid the limits of the very concept of identity—an endless search for the criteria of the sameness of a person. From this perspective, the analysis of the modern theories of identity is still needed. It shows the logic of the further development of the concept of identity. Specifically, the analysis of the modern theories shows that identity "has traditionally been raised in a dualist context."[336] This dualism and the essentialist logic, which follows from the modern dualistic context, are omnipresent in later theories of identity, even if these theories are very innovative and open for the discussion. Byzantine apology of icons suggested a completely different approach to study a person—*hypostasis*. It identifies a person by differences that separate the person from others. The point here is the difference, but not the sameness. This way, *hypostasis* avoids the limits of the self-referential concept of identity.

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[335] Ibid., 170.

[336] Terence Penelhum, "Personal Identity," in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Paul Edwards, vol. 8 (New York: Macmillan Co., 1967), 95.

We can turn to the contemporary writer Milan Kundera, whose heroes are often puzzled by the question of their identity:

> Looking at herself, she wondered what she would be like if her nose grew a millimeter a day. How long would it take before her face began to look like someone else's? And if various parts of her body began to grow and shrink and Tereza no longer looked like herself, would she still be herself, would she still be Tereza? Of course. Even if Tereza were completely unlike Tereza, her soul inside her would be the same and look on in amazement at what was happening to her body. Then what was the relationship between Tereza and her body? Had her body the right to call itself Tereza? And if not, then what did the name refer to? Merely something incorporeal, intangible? … Tereza stood bewitched before the mirror, staring at her body as if it were alien to her, aligned and yet assigned to her and no one else.[337]

In this passage, Kundera muses on the body's relationship to identity, which was underestimated by modern thinkers: how do metamorphosis in the body and appearance affect one's sense of self. The old iconoclastic questions reemerge in the quoted passage: does one's name refer to one's body or something incorporeal? We may notice the dualistic logic in the very set-up of the question. One's name refers either to one's body or to something intangible. Such an approach was a stumbling block in the debates between the iconoclasts and iconophiles. The iconophiles' reply was that the name referred neither to the body nor to the soul exclusively, but to the person him or herself, who was neither the body nor the sole alone, but both. And the person is not intangible. The person is clearly seen by others, so that this is not only the person who participates in his or her reidentification, but also other people. As for the concept of identity, the sameness of a person can be defined only by the person him- or herself, because only the person has access to his or her "self" or essence. It remains a person's privilege to decide whether s/he is the person s/he claims to be.

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[337] Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers Inc., 1984), 139.

Milan Kundera again touches on the core element of identity, self, when he describes the phenomenon of kitsch. The following passage is reminiscent of Lacan's mirror stage, although taken from a very critical perspective:

> …here is a kitsch attitude. Kitsch behavior. The kitsch person's (Kitschmensch) need for kitsch: it is the need to gaze into the mirror of the beautifying lie and to be moved to tears of gratification of one's own reflection.[338]

Similar to Hume's notion of self, Kundera's kitsch is an attention paid to one's own perceptions. One not only looks in the mirror, but also indulges oneself in emotions brought about by its ideal reflection. That person is even moved to tears and accepts this overflow of emotion because it is good and right to be moved. Kundera explains:

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[338] Milan Kundera, *The Art of the Novel* (New York: Grove Press, 1988), 134.

> Kitsch causes two tears to flow in quick succession. The first tear says: How nice to see children on the grass! The second tear says: How nice to be moved together with all mankind, by children running on the grass.[339]

Here, one is moved not so much by the children themselves as by the emotional state caused by the scene. Sartre too noticed this phenomenon: in the act of helping someone, what I see is less the person who needs my assistance, than the image of myself generously offering my assistance; I am moved by my intention to help him.[340]

Kundera is critcal of kitsch, which he expresses as the interaction between one's own ideal "mirror" reflection and self. He sees this as a universal phenomenon. For him, no person is completely free of kitsch. Who has not imagined his own funeral, taking consolation in the contemplation of his mourning loved ones and unappeased enemies? We all carry a "mirror of beautifying lie," sometimes gazing at ourselves in it. It is simply human nature to desire such a mirror. Thus kitsch is sometimes difficult to detect—it hides behind the basic necessities of life: a common need for stability, unity, and beauty.

Kundera inherited his concept of kitsch from Broch, who was still more critical of the phenomenon, seeing it as an admiration of ideal self-reflection:

> …and if kitsch represents falsehood (it is often so defined and rightly so), this falsehood falls back on the person in need of it, on the person who uses this highly considerate mirror so as to be able to recognize himself in the

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[339] Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, 251.
[340] Paul Sartre, *The Transcendence of the Ego* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1960), 59.

> counterfeit image it throws back at him and to confess his own lies (with a delight which is to a certain extent sincere).[341]

Broch's radical criticism stems from the fact that he does not see kitsch as a universal phenomenon—it is pointless to be intolerant of the universal. Instead, he insists that it has specific cultural origins.

In his diary, film director Tarkovsky also points to a cultural context for *self*:

> Compare Eastern and Western music. The West is forever shouting: 'This is me!... Look at me suffering, loving! How unhappy I am! How happy!... In the Eastern tradition they never utter a word about themselves...[342]

While self is seen as a core component in the structure of identity, it is not the universal concept in the study of person. The concept of identity developed within a specific (Western) socio-cultural context. Consider, for example, George Mead's theory of self. In contrast to Locke's and Hume's arguments, Mead emphasized the role of the social in the formation of the mind.[343] The social is incorporated into the mind through "the me." Mead defines "the me" as the reaction of the individual to the attitudes that others hold of him. Therefore, "the self" includes not only "the I," but also "the me." Mead's theory thus adapts the modern concept of identity, while remaining within the general discourse of identity. Treating identity as a common noun, we may overlook or even reject other approaches to the notion of person.

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[341] Hermann Broch, "Notes on the Problem of Kitsch," in Gillo Dorfles, ed. *Kitsch: the World of Bad Taste* (New York: Universe Books, 1969), 49.

[342] Andrey Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time: Reflections on the Cinema* (London: The Bodley Head, 1986), 226.

[343] George Herbert Mead, *Mind, Self, and Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934).

The discourse of identity, for example, which dominated at the time of the invention of photography, led many to reject that invention and the images it produced. Cameras provided a likeness that was not able to convey that which identity described—the inner essence of the person or the sphere of the "intangible," as Baudelaire puts it. This iconoclastic rebuke stemmed from the prevailing concept of identity at the time. Recall, for instance, Locke's experiments in "body transfer." The soul of a prince with "the consciousness of prince" is transferred to the body of a cobbler. To everybody else, the cobbler remains a cobbler, but the cobbler himself who knows this is not the case. The initial debates concerning photography can also be seen in Locke's terms: people think that a photograph genuinely represents a particular person because it bears a similar appearance, but only a person being portrayed can really know if he is actually the same person in the photograph.

The Byzantine iconophiles developed an alternate *concept*, different from that of identity. This alternative is *hypostasis*. Its visual component was so strong that the early Western debates over photography may have been avoided, photographic portraits being fully justified, if hypostasis rather than identity had defined the approach to studying a person. Identity and hypostasis are two dramatically different concepts: the first being essentialist; the last, comparative. Ferdinand de Saussure effectively described the difference between the two in his *Course in General Linguistics*.

In his lesson on linguistic value, Saussure insists on a comparative approach to the word. There are no pre-existing concepts beyond words. Otherwise, words would have the same meanings in different languages, which, of course, is not the case.[344] Words acquire their meanings only in relation and counter-distinction to other concepts.[345] This is also valid for the material side of the word. One word is distinguished from another only through phonic differences, "for difference carries signification."[346] So there are no meanings beyond isolated words (the belief in such is an essentialist approach). Instead meanings are established by the differentiation between words (this being the comparative approach).

Identity and hypostasis embody the same distinction. Here, the Greek notion of *hypostasis* is the comparative approach. A person is recognized thanks to his difference from other people, or, in other words, through his *hypostasis*. This comparative approach emphasizes the visual aspect of a person, since that aspect plays the key role in differentiation. Identity originates from a completely different attitude. The sameness of a person presupposes the person's essence, and that essence is rarely grasped by visual means—the Byzantine iconoclasts rejected icons on the basis of this essentialist approach. Such a belief served as the basis of the early criticisms of photography, which, according to its opponents, was unable to express a person's invisible essence.

Identity has been a primarily theoretical concept, but society needed practical, accurate and efficient ways of identifying people. Whereas the notion of identity always involves a person's state of consciousness, practical identification relies only on material criteria, those related to the body (facial recognition, signature, fingerprints). Photographic portraits, therefore, came very much in handy in this type of identification:

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[344] Ferdinand Sassure, *Course in General Linguistics*, eds. Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye, trans. Wade Baskin (London: Peter Owen, 1960), 116.
[345] Ibid., 117.
[346] Ibid., 118.

> In the early days of the process of identification, whose present standard derives from the Bertillion method, the identity of a person was established through his signature. The invention of photography was a turning point in the history of this process. It is no less significant for criminology than the invention of the printing press is for literature.[347]

Criminology, though, is the only real domain within modern society that still uses a comparative means of referring to a person. Today, it is used with the help of advanced software (*Faces*[348] in the United States and *E-FIT*[349] in the United Kingdom). These programs synthesize face images based on verbal eyewitness accounts. The face is composed of pre-existing types of noses, eyes, eyebrows, cheeks, foreheads, haircuts and other identify features. Neither part of the face is unique: it is the unique composition of typical parts which distinguishes one person from another. This type of software is not simply an electronic means of reconstructing a person's image. It is, in fact, a distinct, comparative approach, which cannot be explained by the existing western concept like identity.

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[347] Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, trans. Harry Zohn (London: NLB, 1973).
[348] http://www.iqbiometrix.com/
[349] http://www.efitforwindows.com/

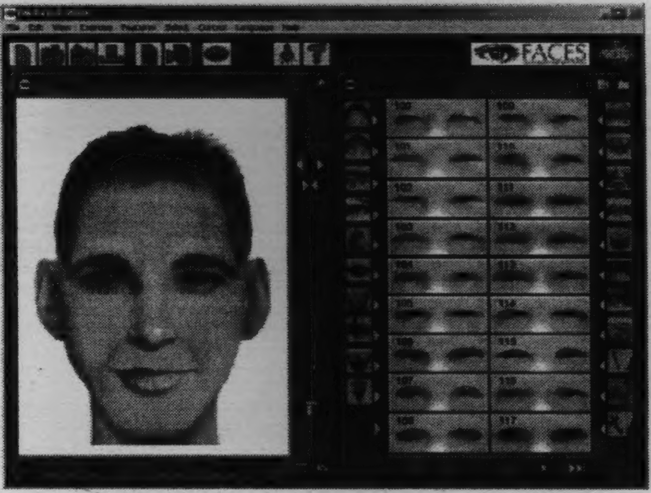

Figure 4.7. Faces Software.[350]

The same synthesizing technique is used in iconography. As Demus notes, the composition of the icon can be broken into pieces, and each part can be easily substituted by another part.[351] The iconographers were guided by written descriptions of each part of the saints' face (usually, the type of nose, eyes, beard and haircut). The combination of typical facial elements, made the saint recognizable. Everyone recognized the Saint's hypostasis in an icon.

Subjectivity: cultural and historical roots

There is still another modern approach to the notion of person—"subject." This idea also exists in conflict with the comparative approach advocated by the Byzantine defenders of icons. The examples of spiritual writings, architecture, literature and painting illustrate that the concept of subject was a constant motif in the West starting from the late Gothic period—I will briefly describe these examples to contextualize the roots of subject. I will argue that the concept of subject is specific to a particular cultural context. Applying it to foreign contexts may lead then to misinterpretations. Applying the western idea of subject to eastern Christian icons, for example, ignores the unique Byzantine dialectics of image. The Byzantine theory of visual image, specifically, the fact that the visual image of a person is identical to the person, excludes subject-object relationships.

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[350] http://www.iqbiometrix.com/

[351] Otto Demus, *Byzantine Art and the West* (New York: New York University Press, 1970), 13.

The emergence of linear perspective in the early Renaissance made painting an *object*; painting became dependent on artists' and observers' states, on their "freely chosen position of a subjective 'point of view'."[352] The space of the painting is formed by and in relation to the observer. Dürer says about Peirro della Francesco, "the first is the eye that sees, the second is the object seen, the third is the distance between them."[353] The space becomes an "extension of the domain of the self": linear perspective therefore transformed reality into objects, bringing under the fold of visual space and making it a direct experience of the observer, the subject.[354]

The shift from universal to subjective occurred shortly before the Renaissance. The spiritual writings and art of the late Gothic period—especially in the north—began to reflect a mystical stream of personal sensitivity in the West. St. Bridget of Sweden's *Revelations* and Matthias Grunewald's *Isenheim Altar* are among the most emotionally charged illustrations of the period, the former having likely influenced Grunewald. St. Bridget focuses on instruments of torture, physiological elements (blood, veins, tongue, bones, heart, teeth, mouth), and the emotional state of the people present at the Crucifixion. Grunewald's *Isenheim Altar* visually echoes St. Bridget's *Revelations*, with its liberal use of: greenish decaying skin; a lifelessly opened mouth with bared teeth; flesh pierced by thorns; a body riddled with wounds; worn, broken blood-soaked feet; pronounced veins; sunken cheeks; and hands which "shrunk a little from the hole of the nails."[355] The Virgin's skin is deathly pale, her mouth too agape. The entire composition is deliberately psychological. The lowered head of the Lord, the Virgin swooning supported by the Apostle John, both create an emotionally charged atmosphere.

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[352] Erwin Panofsky, *Perspective as Symbolic Form* (New York: Zone Books, 1991), 67.
[353] Ibid.
[354] Ibid., 68.

The mysticism and sensitivity of Gothic culture was not only a shift toward a personal, subjective approach to life, but also, and more importantly, a shift toward an idea of oneself, towards one's "self." *Isenheim Altar* was clearly designed to evoke powerful emotions in its viewers, to make them feel horror, compassion, despair, followed by delight. For the first time religious art concerned itself with its observer's feelings and in doing so it paid a necessary price. It could not provoke the subjective emotions it sought and evoke that realm which transcends subjectivity at the same time. Three centuries later Baudelaire also sacrificed the object of representation for the sake of subjective feelings:

> I regard it as useless and tedious to copy what is there in front of me, because nothing of that satisfies me. Nature is ugly, and I like the figments of my own fantasy better than the triviality of material reality. But it would have been more philosophical to ask the doctrinaires in question first whether they were quite certain of the existence of external nature; or, if that question seemed

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[355] Bridget of Sweden, *Revelations of St. Bridget on the Life and Passion of our Lord and the Life of His Blessed Mother* (Rockford: Tan Books and Publishers, Inc., 1984), 45-47.

> too likely to arouse their sarcasm, whether they were quite certain they knew nature in its entirety, nature and all it embodies? … the doctrine really meant: the artist, the true artist, the true poet, should paint only in accordance with what he sees and feels. He must be really faithful to his own nature.[356]

The idea of art proposed by Baudelaire shares a similar aim with that of the late Gothic period—they both seek an intimacy with the observer, to represent what one feels rather than what one sees. A work of art is no longer an *icon* of reality; since it strives to become immanent to the observer, it has to become allegory.

Not surprisingly, allegory was extremely widespread in the literature of the late Gothic period. Everyday life became an allegorical source of comparison to the divine. The *Letters* of St. Catherine are a famous example:

> So I want you to shut yourself up in the open side of God's Son, that open storeroom so full of fragrance that sin itself is made fragrant. There the dear bride rests in the bed of fire and blood.[357]

Allegory is, in a sense, an opposite of the *symbolism* prevalent in the early Middle Ages. During the Middle Ages, historic events, such as those found in the Old Testament, and even natural phenomena, including comets, were understood as prophecies and symbols of events included in the divine plan. This understanding of "symbols" was based on the belief that the divine world extended itself into the earthly world, that it effectively embraced it. Thus the divine world explained the earthly world, particularly the role of the individual. Allegory follows an opposing cour[illegible]—one's personal feelings and character explains the divine. Describing the Passion of Christ, one might appeal to an experience of a knight:

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[356] Charles-Pierre Baudelaire, *Baudelaire: Selected Writings on Art and Literature (Penguin Classics)*, 299.

[357] Catherine of Sienna. *The Letters of Catherine of Siena*, 85.

> Or sweetest treasured love! I can see no other answer for us but the sword that you, dearest love, had in your heart and soul. The sword was your hatred for sin and your love for the Father's honor and our salvation. Or sweetest love, this was the sward that struck your mother's heart and soul.[358]

The divine here fails to embody the subject, rather the subject embodies the divine; the transcendental world of divinity seems almost to dissolve in an array of allegory and sentiment, found so frequently in late Gothic literature. The magnitude of feeling grows to such an extreme level that losing consciousness becomes a common motif in the art (e.g. in Grunewald's) and mystical literature of the period:[359]

> We will be like a heavy drinker, who thinks not of herself but only of the wine she has drunk and of what she still has left to drink. Get drunk on the blood of Christ crucified! Don't let yourself die of the thirst when you have it right there before you! And don't take just a little, but enough to make you so drunk that you will lose yourself.[360]

The architecture of the late Gothic also undergoes a crucial transformation—a powerful upward movement now defines the shape of Gothic cathedrals, as Losev puts it.[361] As Losev notes, in contrast to the symbolism of Roman churches which were made to embody the divine world, the vertical lines of Northern Gothic cathedrals now represent only an *impulse* to the divine, one's movement toward the divine.[362]

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[358] Ibid, 50.
[359] A. F. Losev, *Estetika Vorozhdeniia* [The aesthetics of Renaissance] (M.: Mysl', 1972), 212.
[360] Catherine of Sienna, *The Letters of Catherine of Siena*, 209.

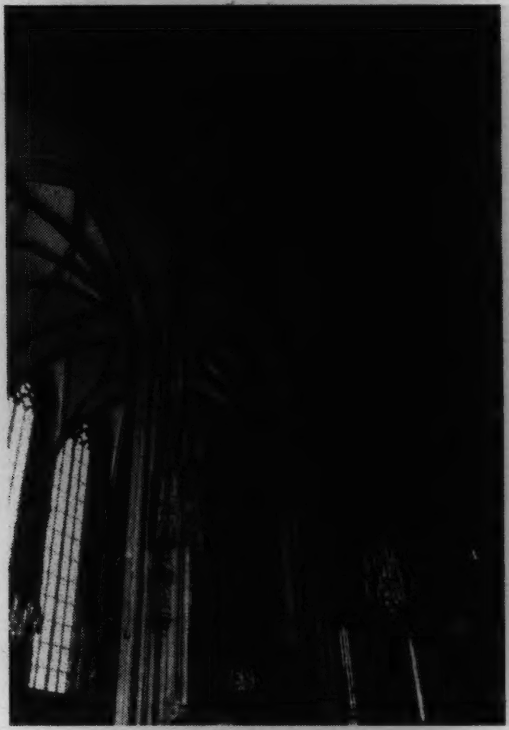

Figure 4.8. St. Stephen's Cathedral.
Vienna. Photograph by the author.

Worringer, a German art critic, writes:

> The sense of vitality of Gothic man is pressed by dualistic distraction and restlessness. To remove this oppression he needs a state of the highest possible excitement, of highest pathos. Gothic man raises his cathedral into the infinite, not from a playful delight in construction, but in order that the

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[361] Losev, *Estetika Vorozhdeniia.*
[362] Ibid.

> sight of this vertical movement, far surpassing all human standards, may liberate in him that tumult of sensation in which alone he can find bliss.[363]

Basilicas, Russian cathedrals (Figure 4.9), Armenian churches do not need to emphasize the verticality for they are the area of the divine.

Figure 4.9. The Saviour Cathedral. XV cemtury.
Moscow. Photograph by the author.

But the late Gothic cathedral is rather an area of subject, which strives to flee into the divine. It is a concrete materialization of the longing for heaven, a complex sensibility fossilized in complex fractals (Figures 4.8, 4.10). Worringer describes Gothic culture as exaltation, sensibility without measure. It takes, however, more than exaltation to build a cathedral. As Losev explains, the existence of these complex constructions shows that their Gothic designers did not unconsciously succumb to a heavenward impulse—instead they had to consciously reflect on this state.[364] The Gothic architect had become interested in his "self," and in this sense, Gothic cathedrals illustrated the formative stage of the "subject."

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[363] Wilhelm Worringer, *Form in Gothic*, trans. Sir Herbert Read (London: Alec Tiranti, 1957), 108.

Figure 4.10. St. Stephen's Cathedral, Vienna.
Photograph by the author.

During this formative stage, the newborn subject developed surprisingly fast and had already grown to a supernatural, grotesque size in *The Works of Francois Rabelais*. The sentimentality and mysticism of the late Gothic had largely disappeared by that point—unavoidable only when a forming subject needed to relate transcendental divine categories to itself. Sensibility succeeded in changing these categories from reality (whatever its relation to the self) into an "object" related to the self, the subject. Sensibility only had to embody in itself the a priori power and dominance of the divine world, which had been previously an insurmountable obstacle for the evolution of the subject. As the realm of the divine faded, sentimentality lost ground, as well—so, in a sense, the subject destroyed itself. But now there were no more major obstacles for the expansion of the subject, which had yet to turn the rest of reality, the visible world, into an object. At the end of the Renaissance, in *The Works of Francois Rabelais*, this process is given an extreme momentum.

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[364] Losev, *Estetika Vorozhdeniia*, 185.

Rabelais transformed the world into a tiny object to be consumed by his swollen, gigantic heroes. In his remarkable explanation of how to "wipe one's tail," 56 objects are found suitable for that purpose, including velvet masks, March cats, his mother's gloves, attorney's bags, hats, many herbs, different animals, "but," he says "to conclude, I say and maintain… there is none in the world comparable to the neck of a goose, that is well downed, if you hold her head betwixt your legs…"[365] The fantastic quantities drunk by its heroes occupies a large portion of the book; even for a baby, Rabelais remarks, "it was impossible to find a nurse sufficient for him in all the country, considering the great quantity of milk that was requisite for his nourishment."[366] The world here is literally eaten by Rabelais' protagonists. Along with enormous amounts of more conventional food, they occasionally consume pilgrims,[367] and flocks of pigeons caught while yawning.[368] Their stomachs are cleaned by people they swallow, safely stowed in "seventeen great balls of copper."[369] In Rabelais, materiality completely replaces and inverts sensibility and "spirituality," key forces in the development of the concept of subject during late Gothic period.

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[365] Francois Rabelais, *The works of Rabelais* (London: Chatto and Windus, Piccadilly, 1883), 33.
[366] Ibid., 19.
[367] Ibid., 77-80.
[368] Ibid., 213-215.
[369] Ibid., 216.

Bakhtin approaches the phenomenon of Rabelais from the perspective of the culture of medieval laughter and marketplace hilarity, which flourished in carnivals and other celebrations, including the Feasts of Fools, and the Feasts of Asses (one might also include Easter laughter or *risus paschalis*.[370] Rabelais' contemporaries saw laughter as a temporary release from the usual solemnity, of life; for Bakhtin too laugher is "a primary source of liberation."[371] We should not, though, forget that festive laughter is temporary by nature—it is restricted to the period of the actual festivity, a fact which is well known and accepted by its participants. These period restrictions are an important difference from the universal laughter of Rabelais.

However all-embracing was the laughter during the carnival, festivities had their definite durations that had been prearranged. During that duration, all order of rules were broken, everything was turned upside down. That subversion, though, was itself a rule of sorts, implemented only on specific days (e.g. until the first day of Lent). It was not only illegal, but plainly absurd to continue this licentious behavior after the carnival had already ended. The simple medieval "people," whom Bakhtin considers bearers of "primordial," universal, revivifying laughter, were the first to lay that laughter aside, and surrender to the solemnity of the first week of Lent. These seasonal cycles with their permissions and restrictions regulated medieval life. Rabelais' borderless laughter then cannot be fully explained through the context of the medieval carnival. Instead Rabelais marks an important stage in the development of the subject: the personal mysticism and sensibility of the late Gothic period gave way to Rabelais, with whom the concept of subject assumes the grotesque size of his gigantic heroes. This development illustrates the formation of subject-object relationships, where the key forces in the development of subject change starting from the late Gothic. The highly emotionally charged atmosphere of late Gothic spiritual writings and painting adjusted the universality of the Divine world to the senses and emotions of people, awakening their subjectivity. The vertical lines and upward movement of late Gothic cathedrals fossilized the subjective *impulse* to the Divine. The invention of the direct perspective adjusted the visual space to the eye of an observer, where the visual became the object and a person became the observer, the subject. In Rabelais, the material subject (his giant protagonists), burdened by an abundance of weakness, replace the spiritual Gothic subject. In *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, the whole world is transformed into an object ready to be consumed. These are just brief examples illustrating the roots for the further development of the concept of subject, which is not restricted to the late Gothic and early Renaissance. Not any culture accommodates the concept of subjectivity. In the next section, I will show that the Byzantine dialectical theory of image prevents subject-object relationships.

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[370] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Tvorchestvo Fransua Rable i narodnaia kul'tura srednevekovia i Renessansa* [Rabelais and his world] (Izd-vo "Antikvariat," 1986); Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, transl. Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984).

[371] Natalie Zemon Davis, Society *and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975), 103.

Proto-image in iconoclasm, icon-worshipping and Modernity

The canonical Eastern Christian icon does not agree with our conventional method of perceiving art. Dürer says of Piero della Francesca: "The first is the eye that sees, the second is the object seen, the third is the distance between them."[372] This model, though, simply does not work with Eastern Christian icons. The function of distance is opposite to that found in Western art after the Renaissance. Instead of viewing the picture from a point that creates perspective and the illusion of real distance, the eye is immersed in the icon's portrayal of space. This is because the icon uses an unusual topology called "inversed perspective." In inversed perspective, lines diverge rather than converge on the scene's horizon and objects appear bigger rather than smaller in the background. For example, in Eastern icons representing the Epiphany, Jordan does not vanish on the horizon; instead the river is seen as a whole. Furthermore, Eastern Christian icons strive to capture the whole of an object, whether it be a mountain, a throne, or a book. The object's left side is seen from the left and likewise its right side is seen from the right (see Figure 4.11).

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[372] Erwin Panofsky, *Perspective as Symbolic Form*, 67.

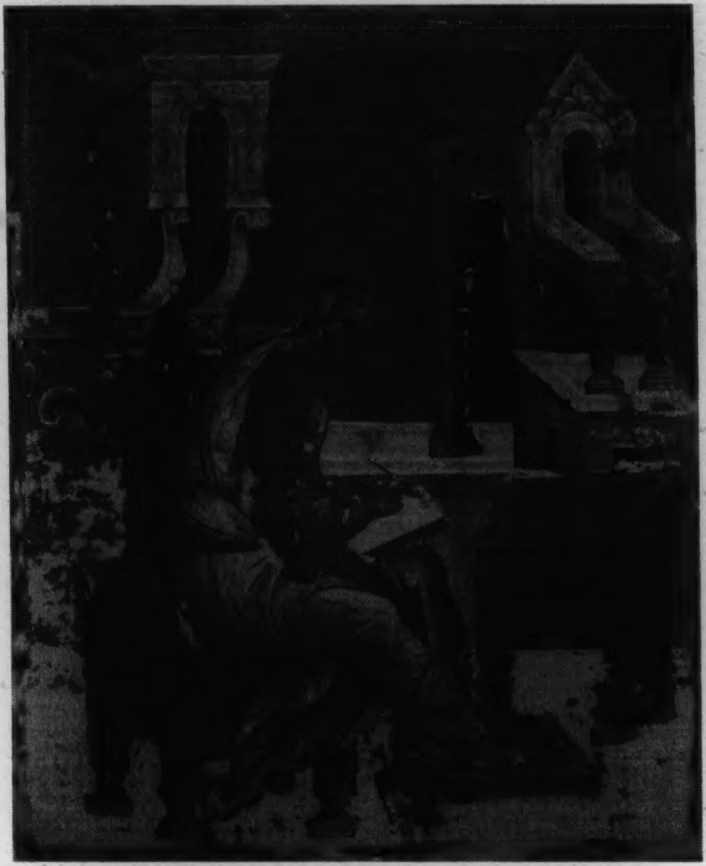

Figure 4.11. Andrej Rublev, *St. Mathew*. The Khitrovo Gospel.
The Russian State Library. Photo by the author from a calendar.

Inversed perspective creates, in the geometric sense, a negative distance from the eye to the icon. The negative distance makes it physically impossible to perceive the icon as an object, or to imagine oneself as a subject. One might say that the icon overflows its own borders. One observes, for instance, that a nimbus extends beyond the icon's upper frame. In Eastern Christian icons, nothing constrains space. Rooms, for example, are depicted as open space. Only a light scarf thrown over buildings indicates that it even is a room or some other form of interior space. Mountains, buildings, and angel wings remain in the background, while the scene itself is placed directly in front of the viewer approaching the icon. This mechanism prevents the scene from receding into depth and forces the eye on the icon's central space, focusing on Christ's *hypostasis*.

The Greek concept of *hypostasis* is roughly translated as "person." Its closest synonym is "face." While in English, face is primarily associated with appearance; in Greek, face is associated with the idea of person. Not surprisingly, in icons the most expressive element is the face. The term "face," in some Eastern Christian cultures, is often even used to mean "icon." The face here looks directly at the icon's viewer. Profiles are generally avoided, and even when a face is turned toward the center of the composition, the icon's "inversed perspective" allows it to be seen almost completely. The result is that the *hypostasis* (or person) of a saint is clearly visible.

In icons the saints are portrayed as peaceful; their postures and gestures are restrained; their movements are economical. There is nothing arbitrary about their appearance: the canonical laws governing icons forbade any kind of arbitrariness. These laws also regulated the bodily proportions of figures, as well as the pattern of the face, including the form of the beard, nose, and eyebrows, as well as the color and length of the hair. Those rules, however, did not undermine the saints' individual characteristics. Individual characteristics *are* emphasized and one can usually tell the different saints apart with ease, referring to their sketch samples referred as *typiki*. Iconographers maintained a canon of recognizable features intrinsic to the person, or *hypostasis,* of each saint.

The main argument put forth by the proponents of icons at the Seventh Ecumenical Council was that these images were made identical to their proto-images by the representation of the *hypostasis*, but that they were different in *ousia*, or essence. They elaborated with a unique dialectics of the image: on the one hand, icon worship was not idolatry because the essence of the image was different from its proto-image but, on the other hand, the icon was not merely a signifier. It was identical to its proto-image. That is to say, that the icon was not an idol because an icon's *ousia*, or essence, was different from God's essence. The Seventh Ecumenical Council emphasized that:

> …an icon lacks not only a soul but also the very substance of the body, I [Epiphanius the Deacon] mean flesh, muscles, nerves, bones, and elements, that is, blood, phlegm, fluid, and gall, the blending of which it is impossible for one to see in an icon. If these were seen in the icon, we would call this a 'man,' and not an 'icon of a man.'[373]

Icons furthermore do not replace proto-images. The same council declared: "The honor which is paid to the image passes on to that which the image represents, and he who reveres the image reveres in it the subject represented."[374]

Does this make the icon into a shadow's shadow? As Plato said about art in *The Republic*, a painting is merely a shadow of a natural object, which is in turn a shadow of the idea of this natural object.[375] By this analogy, the icon only reminded the viewer of the proto-image, not even remotely approaching its essence.

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[373] Daniel J. Sahas, *Icon and Logos: Sources in Eighth-Century Iconoclasm* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), 77.

[374] Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, eds. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: The Seven Eccumenical Councils,* Vol. 14. (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995), 550.

[375] Plato, *The Republic,* trans. Tom Griffith, ed. G. R. F. Ferrari (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 315.

Iconoclasts accepted this line of reasoning. They insisted that no prayer of sanctification could bring the image up to the sanctity of its referent, or proto-image,

> …nor is there any prayer of consecration for it [icon] to transpose it from the state of being common to the state of being sacred. Instead, it remains common and worthless, as the painter made it.[376]

According to the iconoclasts, icons had no particular value except for the one the artist attributed to them.

For the iconophiles the image was identical to its proto-image, in name and in person. The proto-image lent its value to representation, not the iconographer. So, they insisted, no prayer of sanctification, effective or otherwise, was needed since:

> …many of the sacred things which we have at our disposal do not need a prayer of sanctification, since their name itself says that they are all-sacred and full of grace. Consequently, we honor and embrace them as venerable things.[377]

The iconophiles argued that a viewer never broke in his consciousness the link between image and proto-image during his contemplation of the icon. Theodore Studite, (759 – 826 AD), often repeated that:

> …he who reveres an image surely reveres the person whom the image shows; not the substance of the image, but him who is delineated in it. Nor does the

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[376] Sahas, *Icon and Logos*, 77.
[377] Ibid.

> singleness of his veneration separate the model from the image, since by virtue of imitation, the image and the model are one.[378]

Even a century prior to iconoclasm, the Sixth Ecumenical Council had prohibited the symbolic representation of Christ. The canonical Eastern icons had to represent Christ's *hypostasis*; they had to represent a person, not using some symbolical signification like, for example, a lamb.[379] This ban on symbolic representation was meant to prevent the separation of image and proto-image. That provision ensuring the unity of representation and that being represented in *hypostasis* led to several important consequences. The proto-image was neither an inexpressible and imperceptible abstraction, nor a delusion. The proto-image was not, in other words, what Kantian called *noumenon* (a thing in itself), for the proto-image was genuinely comprehensible. It could be seen plainly in its representation and bore an unmistakable similarity to that image. The image was not simply an appearance or a shadow, or a signifier stressing an unreachable signified.

The Eastern Christian dialectics of identity and difference has always been a difficult concept for those schooled in the modern understanding of image. The contemporary concept of *simulacra*, for instance, radically separated the image from its proto-image. Jean Baudrillard briefly references Byzantine Iconoclasm in his work on simulacra:

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[378] Cyril Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire: 312-1453* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1972), 173.
[379] Sahas, *Icon and Logos*, 60-61.

> …the visible machinery of icons substituted for the pure and the intelligible Idea of God … One can say that the icon worshipers were the most modern minds, the most adventurous, because, in the guise of having God become apparent in the mirror of images, they were already enacting his death and his disappearance in the epiphany of his representations.[380]

In order to effectively accommodate Baudrillard's notion of simulacrum and the danger of replacement, we need first to dismantle the link between image and proto-image. It never occurred to the iconophiles, however, to do this; they argued that icons were identical to their proto-images, in name and person. That unity excluded the possibility of simulacrum replacing the proto-image with a manufactured image.

The Byzantine iconoclasts construed the "pure and intelligible Idea of God" as a phenomenon beyond visual representation. The Byzantine iconoclasts claimed, that representation of God is "something that cannot be done, that is, with profane hands giving form to things that are believed with the heart and confessed with the mouth."[381] To the icon worshipper, it is rather the "pure and intelligible Idea of God" that gives way to subjective experience and ultimately reduces God to simulacrum. Iconographers meanwhile followed universal canons prescribing a proto-image's characteristic features, and they replied that these canons prevented any possibility of replacement. According to the Decree of the Great Ecumenical Council, these guides guaranteed historical accuracy, "so the incarnation of the Word of God is shown forth as real and not merely fantastic."[382]

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[380] Jean Baudrillard, "Object," in *Art and Artefact*, ed. Nicholas Zurbrugg (Sage Publications: London, 1997), 5.
[381] Sahas, *Icon and Logos*, 81.

I have already mentioned that a canonical Eastern icon usually depicts the face of God, Theothokos, or a saint. From the perspective of a completely different time and culture, Derrida also notes the unique quality of the portrait among other types of images. He states:

> …the portrait is not just any painting . . . like the photographic portrait, its relation to the referent appears (and it is this appearance that counts even if one must not trust it) irreducible.[383]

Our contemporary perception of portraits, especially photographic portraits, may help us to understand how Byzantine iconophiles understood image. A photograph is identical to its referent on a technical and even chemical level. Roland Barthes says, for example, that it was not the artist, but the chemist who invented photography.[384] Light rays emanating from a body are frozen on a photographic plate, forever securing a link to that body. The frozen light of the referent creates an irreducible presence. Barthes even calls the photograph, "an emanation of the referent."[385]

Apart from Derrida and Barthes, other contemporary thinkers have also acknowledged the special power of photographic portraits. They often ignore, however, the connection between the image and its referent, which accounts for the "irreducible presence" of the referent in the icon as well as in the portrait. For example, Susan Sontag, in line with Baudrillard, acknowledged that portraits play a model role for image in the contemporary world. She also noted a unique power of portraits:

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[382] Schaff, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 550.
[383] Jacques Derrida, "By Force of Mourning," *Critical Inquiry* 22 (1996) (Winter): 171-192.
[384] Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1980).
[385] Ibid., 80.

> But some trace of the magic remains: for example, in our reluctance to tear up or throw away the photograph of a loved one, especially of someone dead or far away.[386]

I take this reluctance to mean, however, that the loved one, his *hypostasis*, is present in his photograph: tearing up the photograph of one's beloved amounts to an attempt at destroying his or her *hypostasis*, his or her person. Sontag on the other hand interpreted this reluctance differently. In Sontag's view, the influence of images extends to overshadowing and even dictating reality:

> The true modern primitivism is not to regard the image as a real thing; photographic images are hardly that real. Instead, reality has come to seem more and more like what are shown by cameras.[387]

Sontag's explanation is similar to the argument of the iconoclasts in the eighth century: they explained a cautious treatment of a portrait as idolatry ("some trace of the magic"). What distinguishes the iconoclasts from the iconophiles is the view that the image is solitary and separated from its original. The iconoclasts feared that this would lead to the image being awarded an exaggerated value. To my mind, a portrait has value because it is identified with a beloved person: as long as a portrait represents a person this portrait has a value. The value of the image has limits, however, because the essence of the portrait is not the essence of its referent. The reluctance to tear a portrait is neither idolatry nor the overshadowing of reality with an image, but the identification of a person in a photograph with a real person. In her last work, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, Sontag questions the arguments which she herself posed in *On Photography*. However, it seems that the main motif remains the same: "The argument is in fact a defense of reality and the imperiled standards for responding to it."[388] This is a defense of reality against the hyperreality constructed by images—the same fear of replacing reality with images.

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[386] Susan Sontag, *On Photography,* 161.
[387] Ibid.

Barthes calls the link between the body of the photographed and the observer "a sort of umbilical cord."[389] I argue rather, that an umbilical cord links the photographed to his or her image, as the proto-image and icon were linked in Byzantine icons, and not to the viewer. The photograph, "an emanation of the referent," is identical with the photographed person and not really dependent upon me or my feelings. From this perspective, a photograph is not an object. This perspective excludes a possibility of subject-object relationships: the viewer ceases to be the subject and the photograph stops to be an object.

My explanation is particularly applicable to early daguerreotypes. The interest in daguerreotypes was widespread, but reactions were mixed. Some artists and thinkers, for example, were disturbed by its implications. Charles Baudelaire was among those early critics. Others were in the midst of excitement by photography's ability to produce an exact image, but Baudelaire was adamant that visual representation held a deeper purpose then simply producing likenesses; instead they should represent the artist's dreams. He believed that art, "the domain of the impalpable and the imaginary," is in conflict with the exactitude of photography.[390] The modern artist does not depend on a model, according to Baudelaire, he draws from memory. Therefore, he considered photography unnatural device, inconsistent with human nature, principally with the faculty of human memory. The film theorist Siegfried Kracauer explained the conflict as a falsification or an embellishment of the various degrees by human memory, which tends to select only what is personally significant.[391] Photography, on the other hand, is a cold and exact memory, a replication of exact likeness. What troubled Baudelaire was an implicit threat to the subjectivity of both the artist and the viewer. The irreducible presence of a person in his photograph, that is, the presence of the *hypostasis*, is both independent of the artist and the observer. This obvious independence, from artist and observer, seemed to undermine the role of subjectivity in art.

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[388] Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2004), 109.
[389] Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1980), 81.

The peril of subjectivity, however, had been greatly exaggerated. Every single innovation in the photographic technique tended to expand, rather than reduce, the potential playground of the subject. Modern cameras, for instance, take instant images, which the human eye would not otherwise be able to see. Computer programs like "Photoshop" further allows a plethora of subjective interpretations of what had previously seemed objective images. Contrary to the fear that the subject would be destroyed by technological innovation, developments in the photographic technique have allowed a greater strengthening of subjectivity. Photography sometimes does this by enhancing certain details that may have escaped the naked eye of the observer. Barthes calls this *punctum*: "For *punctum* is also: sting, speck, cut, little hole—and also a cast of the dice. A photograph's *punctum* is that accident which pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me)."[392] *Punctum* often lie in secondary details, such as a bandage on a girl's finger, or a child crooked teeth. Barthes says, "I dismiss all knowledge, all culture, I refuse to inherit anything from another eye than my own."[393] According to Barthes, photographs provide the observer with something deeply subjective and immanent. This is in opposition to *studium*. *Studium* is a cultural connotation in a photograph.[394] It is an "unconcerned desire" expressed as "*I like/I don't like*" and is different from the *punctum*'s "*I love*."[395] The icon, though, fails to fall on either side of the *punctum/studium* dichotomy. *Punctum* work as an exercise of viewer's subjectivity, while *studium* involves the subjectivities of the viewer, the photographer, and culture:

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[390] Baudelaire, *Baudelaire: Selected Writings on Art and Literature (Penguin Classics)*, 233.
[391] Siegfried Kracauer, "Photography," in *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, trans. and ed. Thomas Levon (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, 1995), 54.

> To recognize the studium is inevitably to encounter the photographer's intentions, so enter into harmony with them, to approve or disapprove of them, but always to understand them, to argue them within myself, for culture (from which the studium derives) is a contract arrived at between creators and consumers.[396]

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[392] Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 27.
[393] Ibid., 51.
[394] Ibid., 26.
[395] Ibid., 27.
[396] Ibid., 27-8.

In iconography, sameness of image and proto-image excludes both the subjectivities of the viewer and creator.

The history of *punctum* in Western culture goes back as far as pre-Renaissance art. Matthias Grunewald's *Isenheim Altar* is one of the first examples of an image immanent to artist and observer. Everything in *Crucifixion*, one of the *Isenheim Altar* pieces, evokes subjectivity—Madonna in a swoon, for instance her deathly pale skin, and her mouth hanging agape. Painting began to call more and more on the feelings of its observer. However, it was also necessary to pay some price due to the reality it represented. It could not be immanent to both the subjective sentiments of artist and observer and to its proto-image at the same time. The proto-image, after all, is independent of subjectivity. As soon as a painting moves closer to the subjectivity of its painter and admirers, it becomes piece of art, no longer an "image" or an *icon* of the referent. Art strives to become immanent to the observer; it has then to be transformed into allegory, a signifier of reality. Much later, the notion of *punctum* would be used in this way to reconcile photography and subjectivity.

Berger too tries to reconcile photography and subjectivity. To him, photography without subjectivity, with "no invented story, no explanation offered," is just a banal preservation of appearances.[397] The camera is able to bring forward evidence, to produce appearance of a thing, but it is not able to bring forward the meaning of that thing.[398] Photography, as opposed to art, does not actively involve the consciousness of the photographer. Berger notes "a deep violence" to "subjective experience" in "the positivist evidence of a photograph as if it represented the ultimate and only truth."[399] However, even photographs of unknown people are often still moving; they evoke sentiment in us. Berger believes that these types of photographs, with their emotional impact, are effective because they "contain and are confronted by an idea."[400] Here we see the need for the platonic *eidos,* which has the ability to enliven a mute image. The viewer sees meanings in the photograph's appearance, drawing from it "resemblances, analogies, sympathies, antipathies."[401] Appearances speak to a viewer by awakening his memories of past experience. This is certainly a subjective process.

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[397] John Berger, Jean Mohr and Nicolas Philibert, *Another Way of Telling* (London: Writers and Readers, 1982), 87.
[398] Ibid., 92.

Berger replies to the principle question of the Byzantine iconoclastic debates: What does the likeness of a person represent? He answers, "appearance": "Cameras are boxes for transporting appearances."[402] This is not surprising. If the relationship between an image and a viewer is a simple question of subjectivity, then that image has become a mere appearance, open to multiple interpretations. Iconography relies on a different relationship. The icon here is identical to the person it represents. It is supposed to represent the "person," not just person's appearance.

According to Baudrillard, "Art has become iconoclastic. Modern iconoclasm no longer consists in breaking images, but in a profusion of images where there is nothing to see."[403] However, as long as there is the subject who watches an image, the subject will always find something to see. What distinguishes iconoclasm—

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[399] Ibid., 107-11.
[400] Ibid., 126.
[401] Ibid., 115.
[402] Ibid., 92.
[403] Baudrillard, *Art and Artefact*, 11-12.

modern as well as Byzantine—is the presence of the subject, the presence, in Dürer's words, of "the eye that sees." Eastern Christian icons remained out of reach for the subject and for the iconoclastic consciousness, which is not able to grasp the idea that the person in an icon is identical to the referent, or proto-image, in a manner independent of the observer and their maker. For these same reasons, the first daguerreotypes bothered modern artists; the shockingly realistic images of the first photographs seemed identical to the photographed and independent of the subjectivity of both the photographer and the viewer.

Chapter 5. General discussion and conclusion

Likenesses have always impressed the minds and moved the feelings of people. The funerary portraits found in Egyptian tombs (Figures 5.1. and 5.2.) or the portraits of the dead found on gravestones in Russian cemeteries (Figure 5.3.) may be moving.

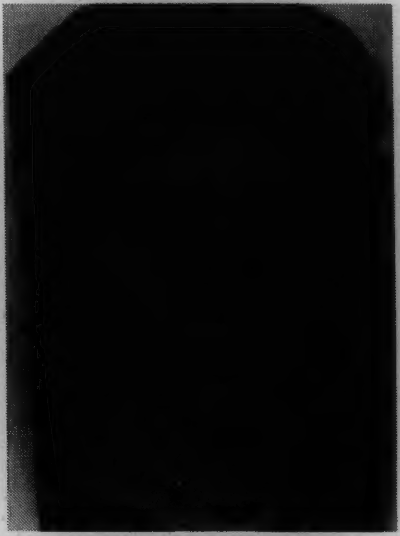

Figure 5.1. Portrait de Femme. XII century BC.
Louvre. Photo by the author.

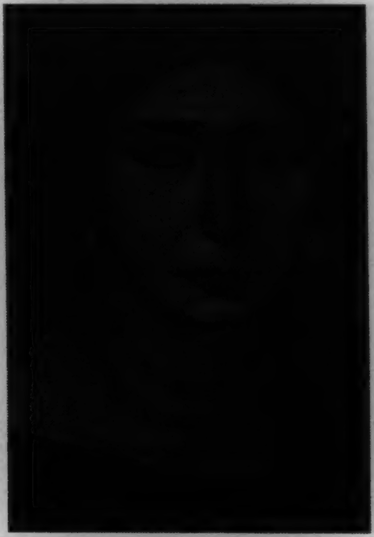

Figure 5.2. Portrait de Femme. III century BC.
Louvre. Photo by the author.

The person may be dead, but here he or she is looking at you right from the gravestone portrait. Icons are still prominent in any Orthodox church, despite the Byzantine iconoclastic movement, and their appearance is striking. Visual images of human beings especially question the visual phenomenon. One knows that the portrait of a loved one is not the loved one him- or herself, but still kisses it. Again, one is aware that the portrait of a hated one is just only a portrait, but still one tears it up in a moment of anger. Finally, the old iconoclastic question, "Would you stomp on a portrait?" Even though we are aware that it is only a picture, a lifeless representation, we hesitate. What is it that is so unusual about likenesses? Why did they bother Byzantine iconoclasts to such a degree?

Figure 5.3. Gravestone portraits. Russian cemetery.
Photograph by Yuri Mayorov. Courtesy of the photographer.

The peculiarity of likenesses was also made clear by the invention of photography. The old iconoclastic fears rose to the surface again. Balzac, for instance, was terrified of being photographed. Poe too noted the strange phenomenon of early photographic portraits—the seeming unity of photograph and photographed.[404] The question remains: Why do photographs provoke such a strong reaction? Is it an effect of presence? I was able to find an explanation in the non-modern theory proposed by the Byzantine iconophiles. During the Byzantine iconoclastic unrests, the theory of a person's visual image was not simply a scholastic prerogative; it was a matter of life and death. A wrong answer could end in a charge of heresy and cost one one's life. The theory forged under these conditions led to a potential answer to the question I ask in the second chapter:

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[404] Edgar Allan Poe, "The Daguerreotype," Alexander's Weekly Messanger 15 (1840) (January 15): 2.

"What does a person's likeness represent?" How does this theory rule out those eternal iconoclastic fears of replacement? The Byzantine iconophiles answered that an image is not able to replace its original, since it itself is identical with that original. It is this unity of representation and represented which restrains one from stomping on a photograph. And it is this same unity which moves people to kiss portraits of their loved ones. To a modern sensibility it may seem that this type of attitude is an extension of the primitive magic, as Sontag metaphorically puts it.[405] Did Balzac then have a reason to be afraid of being photographed? An image, though, does differ from its subject in one important respect–essence. The portrait is identical with the portrayed in name and *hypostasis* but, at the same time, it is different in essence. This unique dialectic of the visual sought to appease two concerns at once. On the one hand, it eliminated the possibility of replacing reality with the hyperreality of a visual image. Images are identical with their proto-images. In that sense the icon is identical to its referent and one cannot be replaced by oneself. On the other hand, there was no danger of idolatry. As the iconophile leader, Patriarch Nicephoros explains, the very concept of image implies that there is not a co-substantiality between an image and its original. The two great iconoclastic fears were effectively addressed.

The iconoclasts, though, had other objections. Visual representations of people, they claimed, misrepresent the human essence. The iconoclasts, therefore, suggested alternative "images" like virtues, deeds and words. Only immaterial images, after all, can express the complex human essence. The logic of this position was based on the opposition of the internal (something hidden) and external (a shallow appearance). The same internal versus external opposition was, as Derrida observes, firmly rooted in Western metaphysical philosophy from Plato to Hegel, even extending beyond those boundaries from pre-Socrates to Heidegger. I explain the Byzantine iconoclastic movement as an attempt to move towards the essentialist approach based on the opposition of the internal and external. That opposition made an effective dialog between iconoclasts and iconophiles impossible. Their approaches were simply irreconcilable. The iconophiles could not accept the objection that icons did not accurately reflect the opposition between the external and the internal. They argued that icons did not even try to reveal and express anything hidden or internal. They depicted neither essence, nor appearance. Iconographers did not paint the soul or any form of invisible divinity, nor did iconography involve the individual imagination of the iconographer or viewer. Nor did they present the Platonic conception of person. Iconographers painted what they saw—iconography was a matter of evidence, not imagination,[406] impressions, or unconscious impulse. What then did iconographers see? They saw and depicted a person him- or herself—a person's *hypostasis*—that which one sees when looking at a person. Iconographers were led by a practical aim, to identify a saint for prayer, meaning to distinguish one saint from another.

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[405] Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Picador, 1973), 161.

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[406] For the idea of art criticism as a matter of imagination rather than evidence see: Stanley Cavell, "Aesthetic Judgment and a Philosophical Claim," in his *Must We Mean What We Say?* (New York: Charles Scribnier's Sons, 1969), 89-96.

Although some artists and photographers claim that the visual embodies "the most vital part of ourselves,"[407] they are actually closer to iconoclasts than to iconophiles. Their aim—to express the vital part of a person—was shared by the Byzantine iconoclasts. Iconoclasm is not an aversion to art or the visual as such, but rather a belief that there is a hidden essence inside all people, waiting to be unveiled, and visual representation simply cannot portray that intangible element. According to this belief, everything lying on the surface, everything external and visual, has an inferior status, whose destiny is, in the best case, to reveal some inner essence, or, in the worst case, to conceal that essence. This notion was examined extensively by many German philosophers in their theories on art.[408] I state that iconoclastic dissatisfaction with likenesses is explained by the iconoclastic belief that likenesses represent only dull appearance, incapable of portraying a person in his or her entirety. According to the iconophiles, icons do not represent the appearance of a person, but what is seen, when one looks at a person. Looking at a person, one sees not just a person's appearance, but a concrete manifestation of the person, the person's *hypostasis*. This statement was a stumbling block for the Byzantine iconoclasts. The concept of *hypostasis* avoids the limitations of theories of identity—an endless search for the criteria of a person's identity. The essentialist approach assumes that there is some essence of a person that defines the person's "sameness." *Hypostasis*, however, identifies a person by those differences that separate the person from other people. It is a comparative approach. The written portrayals of the saints, intended as a guide to iconographers, describe, for instance, each Saint's form of nose, eyes, eyebrows, and beard. None of these separate features on its own is unique. A single facial component of the face does not express any hidden essence, but a unique combination of facial components allows one to distinguish the saint, "for," as Saussure explains, "difference carries signification."[409] The same approach can be seen in the facial software used by police for identification purposes. These programs synthesize the face based on the comparative verbal descriptions of eyewitnesses. Not unlike iconography, they are designed for recognition of a person who can be recognized by the differences that separate this person from everyone else. There is a concrete person here, but not that person's "uniqueness," meaning something inexpressible, belonging exclusively to him or her. Photo identification, like iconography, is a matter of evidence, not imagination. The Byzantine iconophile theory of visual identification throws a light on contemporary photo identification, a potential area of interest for my future research.

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[407] Bernard Shaw, "George Bernard Shaw Improves at the Salon. Photography in its Relation to Modern Art, 1909," in *On Photography*, ed. Bill Jay and Margaret Moore (Salt Lake City: P. Smith Books, 1989), 112.

[408] See, for instance: Georg William Friedrich Hegel, *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics* (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1993); Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings: From Being and Time (1927) to the Task of Thinking (1964)* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1977).

On a more fundamental level, the debate between iconophiles and iconoclasts, whether Byzantine or modern, is not one about the appreciation of or aversion to art and visual representations. Instead it is a conflict between two different attitudes toward a person's *icon*; the essentialist and the comparative. This conflict raises the eternal question of person, and identity is not a universal concept in this question. Likewise, *hypostasis* is probably also not unique. However, there is, at least, one alternative, *hypostasis*, that may clarify things, on, at least, the linguistic level, and ascribe the status of proper nouns rather than common.

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[409] Ferdinand Sassure, *Course in General Linguistics,* eds. Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye, trans. Wade Baskin (London: Peter Owen, 1960), 118.

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